

## Maritime



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### **MENA Analysis: Houthi leader on March 7 gives Israel four-day ultimatum to renew entry of goods to Gaza before resuming Red Sea maritime attacks campaign; take precautions**

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### **Executive Summary:**

- On March 7, Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi gave Israel an ultimatum of four days to renew the entry of aid to Gaza before he would resume maritime attacks against the “Israeli enemy.”
- Israel is unlikely to cave in to the ultimatum amid its employment of a hardline stance vis-a-vis Hamas. This renders the renewal of Houthi maritime attacks against ships highly likely when the ultimatum expires.
- Despite the Houthis framing their action as “against Israel,” a renewal of their maritime attacks would likely pose a broad threat to foreign shipping in general, given precedent.
- The expected renewal of Houthi maritime attacks is liable to trigger renewed US-led aerial strikes against Houthi infrastructures in Yemen, which may extend to Houthi-held civilian infrastructures under the new President Trump-led US administration.
- It also cannot be excluded that it would trigger Israeli strikes against Houthi-held infrastructures, which in the past included power plants, maritime ports, as well as the Sanaa International Airport.

- Such an occurrence would prompt the Houthis to renew ballistic missile and UAV attacks against Israel and attempted attacks against US-led maritime coalition vessels at sea, perpetuating the tit-for-tat dynamic between the parties.



## Current Situation

- In a speech on March 7, the leader of the Yemen-based Houthi movement, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, stated that if Israel continues to prevent the entry of aid to Gaza within four days, the Houthis will renew their “naval operations against the Israeli enemy.”
- The statement was in relation to Israel’s [March 2](#) decision to suspend the entry of goods to Gaza following the expiration of the truce’s Phase One.

Source: [Ansar Allah’s \(Houthi Movement\) War Media Channel](#)

## Assessments & Forecast:

1. The Houthis suspended their maritime attacks campaign against commercial shipping as well as their ballistic missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against Israel on [January 19](#), when the First Phase of the Israel-Hamas truce came into force. In recent days, tensions have escalated between Israel and Hamas following the completion of the First Phase of the truce, with the Israeli government embracing a more hardline stance against Hamas. This was reflected in the aforementioned policy to suspend the entry of goods into Gaza and Israel’s reluctance to engage in talks over the truce’s Phase Two, which would require a commitment from Israel to end its military campaign completely. At the current juncture, Israel is preparing to resume its military campaign in Gaza, a scenario that could materialize on short notice.
2. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi’s latest remarks underscore the Ansar Allah movement’s “finger on the trigger” stance vis-a-vis Israel, in which it pledged to resume its actions against Israel if it “derails” the truce. The current statement constitutes an escalation within this context. This is because it outlined a clear red line and a public commitment to renew maritime attacks if Israel does not change its policy within four days, to which Jerusalem is highly unlikely to adhere. Thus, the renewal of the Houthis’ efforts to target maritime vessels in and around the Red Sea and Gulf of

Aden is a highly likely scenario.

3. The Houthis framed their maritime attack campaign as one that is directed against Israel and not global shipping in general. Despite that, many of their previous maritime attacks targeted ships owned by many countries, [especially US and UK-owned ships](#). In some of the attacks, foreign crew members have also been occasionally killed. Furthermore, the Houthis previously designated any foreign shipping firm conducting business at Israeli ports (designated “Occupied Palestine” in Houthi discourse) as legitimate targets. The Houthi movement has also been prone to misidentifying or falsely designating ships as Israel-linked, which can be attributed to the complex and frequently changing nature of ownership in the maritime shipping industry, possible outdated databases the Houthis rely on, and other factors. **FORECAST:** In this context, a renewed maritime attack campaign by the Houthis will likely have a broader impact on global shipping and could threaten many ships crossing the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Shipping firms publically known as associated with Israel or Israeli business people would be exposed to a more compounded threat.
4. **FORECAST:** The expected renewal of the Houthi maritime attacks campaign would be the first time they engaged in this activity since the inauguration of the new US administration under President Trump. This administration has embraced a much more [hardline stance against Iran and its regional allies](#), as was highlighted in its [re-designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization \(FTO\)](#). In this context, the Houthis’ resumption of maritime attacks is liable to trigger renewed and more significant US-led airstrikes against Houthi infrastructures in Yemen, which may extend beyond the realm of military targets as an escalatory stance compared to the previous US administration.
5. **FORECAST:** Furthermore, the Israeli government, emboldened by more robust US support, is liable to embrace a policy of retaliation vis-a-vis the Houthis for this expected renewal of maritime attacks. This would risk further Israeli action against Houthi infrastructures in Yemen, which in the past extended to power plants, maritime ports, as well as the Sanaa International Airport. An Israeli decision to retaliate against maritime attacks cannot be excluded. Such a scenario would also likely prompt the renewal of the Houthis’ aerial attacks against Israel, further perpetuating the tit-for-tat dynamic between the parties.

## Recommendations:

1. Ahead of an expected renewal of Houthi maritime attacks at sea around Yemen, take precautions to ensure the safety of vessels and crews.
2. Remain apprised of UKMTO and US DOT Maritime Administration-issued notices and be aware of NATO Shipping Center alerts.
3. Businesses and consumers worldwide are advised to allot for further supply chain disruptions due to the expected renewal of Houthi attacks in and around the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.
4. Monitor regional events related to the Israel-Hamas conflict, given their corresponding link to the Houthi campaign at sea.
5. Conduct specific risk assessments before essential Red Sea/Gulf of Aden voyages, including a review of ships’ ownership and management history for past links to the US, UK, and Israel.
6. Remain vigilant for suspicious objects, actors, and possible threats at sea.
7. Ensure crewmembers’ security awareness, contingency plans, and ability to respond to incidents at sea.
8. For custom risk assessments, contact us at [intel@max-security.com](mailto:intel@max-security.com).

## Within Yemen:

1. Avoid all travel to Yemen due to the volatile security environment and underlying risk of armed conflict, terrorism, crime, kidnappings, and unrest.
2. Those operating or residing in Yemen are advised to avoid the vicinity of any government, military, or strategic civilian infrastructure in Houthi-held areas over the coming days and weeks due to the likelihood of retaliatory strikes against such facilities. This includes power plants, maritime ports,

and the Sanaa International Airport.