



THE HOUTHI MOVEMENT (ANSARALLAH – “SUPPORTERS OF GOD”)

PROFILE

The Houthis (Ansar Allah) are a Zaydi Shiite armed group from Yemen's Saada governorate. The group has its roots in a Zaydi revivalist movement called Believing Youth, which was founded in 1992, as a reaction to foreign intervention in the region and the marginalization of the Zaydi sect in Yemen. The arrest of 800 Believing Youth supporters and the attempted capture of their leader, Hussain Al-Houthi, in 2004 marked the beginning of the Houthi insurgency. The Houthis capitalized on the political instability following the 2011 Yemeni revolution to expand their control over large areas of Yemeni territory, despite facing significant resistance from the Saudi-led coalition and non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda and the Southern Transitional Council. The Houthis currently control approximately 28 per cent of Yemen's territory, primarily in the north and west. The Houthis have positioned themselves as a national resistance movement, claiming to defend all Yemenis from foreign interference, particularly from Saudi Arabia and its promotion of Wahhabism, while portraying themselves as opponents of corruption, extremism, and disorder, and as representatives of marginalized tribal groups, including the Zaydi community. The group has drawn attention for its alignment with the Iran-led 'Axis of Resistance' and its recent support for Hamas during the ongoing Gaza conflict, exemplified by direct air attacks on Israel and indirect pressure on Israel through the disruption of international maritime trade in the Red Sea.

GOALS/ TARGETS

1. Maintain and expand control in Yemen; gain international recognition.
2. Eliminate foreign interference, particularly Western and regional influences, namely from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, from Yemen.
3. Safeguard Zaidi Shiism and counter the influence of Saudi-promoted Wahhabism, a strict and ultra-conservative interpretation of Sunni Islam.
4. Oppose Zionism and the State of Israel.

Targets: The Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, the West, Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Southern Transitional Council

OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS

Financing: Alleged support from Iran and Hezbollah; taxation in Houthi-controlled areas; illicit shipment of Iranian commodities.

Recruitment Tactics: Offer financial incentives, food, and other perks to impoverished families; recruit children through intimidation or bribery; infuse propaganda into school curricula; force locals to fight; leverage the Israel-Gaza conflict to position themselves as defenders of Palestine.

Terror Tactics/ Weaponry:

- **Early Phase:** Small-scale guerrilla warfare with ambushes, sniping, use of mines, and public executions.
- **2010s:** Shift to heavy weaponry stolen from Yemeni government; trained by Iran/Hezbollah in advanced tactics and systems (guided missiles, IEDs, drones); expansion into maritime warfare.
- **2020s:** Expanded use of advanced weaponry (anti-ship missiles, drone boats, unmanned underwater vessels); attacks on shipping vessels in the Red Sea corridor, particularly those linked to Israel.

STRUCTURE

Size: ~350,000

Leader: Abdul-Malik al-Houthi (brother of movement's founder)

Structure: Centralized control led by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, who appoints regional leaders; Supreme Political Council acts as de facto government; maintains a sophisticated military structure with specialized units and clear chains of command; has strong intelligence and internal security apparatus.

Allies: Iran (political, financial, and military support); Russia (provided satellite targeting data for the Houthis to attack commercial shipping); Hezbollah (training, weapons, and logistical assistance); al-Shabaab (reportedly to amplify the Houthis' threat to the Bab el-Mandeb global shipping chokepoint)



THE HOUTHİ MOVEMENT (ANSARALLAH – “SUPPORTERS OF GOD”)

THREAT ANALYSIS

The Houthis present a significant regional threat due to their growing military strength, the exacerbation of Yemen’s humanitarian crisis, and their ability to disrupt global supply routes. Since the onset of the war on Gaza, the Houthis have launched nearly 500 attacks on shipping and on Israel. The impact on trade has been significant, with traffic through the Suez Canal down by about 60 percent since 2023, highlighting the clear threat Houthis can pose on regional and international trade flowing through the Red Sea. Moreover, the Houthis’ alignment with the Axis of Resistance positions them as a significant actor in the regional security landscape, benefiting from resources and operational expertise provided by Iran. As demonstrated by their recent operations in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and attacks on Saudi Arabia, the Houthis possess both the operational capacity and the resources to compound on the shipping crisis is the Strait of Hormuz, being executed by Iran in its war against the U.S. and Israel, by exerting pressure on another one of the world’s most vital shipping lanes.

DESIGNATION

The Houthis were originally designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) during President Donald Trump’s first term, undesignated as an FTO by the Biden administration, which then went on to designate the group as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in January 2024. On January 22, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order initiating the process to re-designate the group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), a designation that was formally reinstated in March 2025. The group is considered an “armed group” by the majority of the world.

RECENT & NOTABLE ATTACKS

- » **July 2026 – Present:** The Houthis announced a plan to impose a maritime blockade against Saudi Arabia in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and have carried out a number of missile and drone attacks on Saudi shipping vessels, oil infrastructure, military bases, and cities. In mid-September 2026, Houthi forces captured the port city of Mokha in southwestern Yemen, as well as multiple islands in the Bab el-Mandeb, from the Yemeni government, a significant change in territorial control in Yemen. They also credibly claimed to have taken down a Saudi F-35 with a surface-to-air missile.
- » **May 2025 – June 2025:** No significant attacks have occurred; however, regular, mostly unsuccessful missile strikes continue to target Israel. On May 6, Oman brokered a ceasefire agreement between the Houthis and the United States, under which the Houthis agreed to halt attacks on U.S. vessels. The ceasefire does not extend to Israel.
- » **January 2025 – April 2025:** There have been no significant attacks; however, regular, mostly unsuccessful missile strikes have targeted Israel and U.S. warships in the Red Sea throughout these months. These persistent attacks demonstrate the Houthis’ determination to sustain pressure on both the United States and Israel.
- » **December 2024:** Direct conflict between Israel and Houthi forces has intensified significantly, highlighting the Houthis’ growing capability to bypass Israel’s advanced air defenses. Key incidents have included a drone strike on a residential building in Yavneh, a nighttime missile attack on a school in Ramat Gan and a missile attack on a playground in Jaffa. Whilst no casualties have been reported, the frequency of attacks underscore the Houthis as a resilient force and the only “Axis of Resistance” group yet to be neutralized by Israel.



THE HOUTHI MOVEMENT (ANSARALLAH – “SUPPORTERS OF GOD”)

- » **October 2024:** Houthi forces launched an unmanned explosive-laden vessel at a Panama-flagged oil tanker, causing significant damage. In a separate assault, they fired an anti-ship missile targeting a Liberian-flagged bulk carrier in the Red Sea. These high-profile were part of a year-long campaign to destabilize international trade routes through the Red Sea, thus boosting public attention for the Houthi cause and expanding its international legitimacy. No casualties were reported.
- » **September 2024:** In retaliation for Israel's military campaign in Gaza, Houthi forces fired a long-range ballistic missile at Israel, though Israeli air defenses were able to intercept the missile. This marked the longest-range missile ever fired from Yemen towards Israel. Separately, the Houthis launched a total of 23 ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones at three U.S. destroyers in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, all of which were successfully intercepted.
- » **August 2024:** The Houthis detonated explosives on a Greek-flagged vessel in the Red Sea carrying one million barrels of oil, raising concerns about an environmental disaster. Later that month, they carried out a three-pronged attack on a Liberian-flagged oil tanker in the Red Sea, which included the use of an unmanned explosive-laden vessel.
- » **July 2024:** In a significant escalation, Houthi drones struck Tel Aviv, killing one civilian and injuring at least ten others. This attack, deep into Israeli territory, showcased the group's growing drone capabilities. On the same day, the Houthis also mounted multiple maritime assaults on commercial vessels in the Red Sea.
- » **June 2024:** Houthi forces attacked a bulk carrier with an unmanned explosive-laden vessel, sinking the ship and causing one casualty. The group also launched a double missile attack on a Palauan-flagged cargo ship, severely injuring one crew member.
- » **March 2024:** A Houthi anti-ship missile struck a Barbados-flagged commercial vessel off Yemen's coast, sparking a catastrophic fire and resulting in three fatalities, one of several attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea that month.
- » **September 2023:** The Houthis carried out a drone attack on the Saudi-Yemen border, killing four Bahrain Defense Force members and injuring others, as part of their ongoing fight against the Saudi-led coalition, which includes Bahrain, in the Yemen civil war.
- » **March 2022:** The Houthis launched a series of coordinated attacks using drones and ballistic missiles against key Saudi energy infrastructure, including an Aramco fuel depot in Jeddah and oil refineries in Ras Tanura and Rabigh, disrupting global oil prices. They also targeted Saudi border cities Jizan and Najran, hitting water desalination plants and electricity stations.

****This is not a comprehensive list.**