

# Fears of escalation after Israel hits Huthi-held Yemen port

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- A Gulf official said there were "serious concerns in Riyadh
- Israeli escalation could "plunge the region into utter chaos"

AFP | Hodeida, Yemen

Israel pounded Yemen's Huthi-held port of Hodeida with air strikes yesterday for the second time in a month, stoking fears of escalation as it warned Yemen could face the same fate as Iran.

Huthi-controlled areas of Yemen have come under repeated Israeli strikes since the Iran-backed rebels began launching missile and drone attacks on Israel, declaring they act in solidarity with Palestinians over the Gaza war.

In its latest raids, Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israel struck "targets of the Huthi terror regime at the port of Hodeida" and aimed to prevent any



Yemenis brandish their rifles and chant slogans during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians and in condemnation of Israel and the US, in the Huthi-run capital Sanaa

attempt to restore infrastructure previously hit.

The renewed strikes on Yemen are part of a year-long Israeli bombing campaign against the Huthis, but the latest threats have raised fears of a wider conflict in the poverty-stricken Arabian Peninsula country.

"Yemen's fate will be the same as Tehran's," Katz said.

His warning was a reference to the wave of surprise strikes Israel launched on Iran on June 13, targeting key military and nuclear facilities.

During the 12-day war, the United States carried out its own attacks on Iran's nuclear programme on June 22, striking facilities at Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz.

A Gulf official told AFP there were "serious concerns in Riyadh... that the Israeli strikes on the Huthis could turn into a large, sustained campaign to oust the movement's leaders".

Any Israeli escalation could "plunge the region into utter chaos", said the official, requesting anonymity because he cannot brief the media.

## 'Heavy equipment'

The Huthis' Al-Masirah television reported "a series of Israeli air strikes on the Hodeida port".

A Huthi security official, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, told AFP that "the bombing destroyed the port's dock, which had been rebuilt following previous strikes."

On July 7, Israeli strikes hit Hodeida and two nearby locations on the coast, with targets including the Galaxy Leader cargo ship, captured in November 2023, which the Israelis said had been outfitted with a radar system to track shipping in the Red Sea.

A Yemeni port employee in Hodeida said the strikes targeted "heavy equipment brought in for construction and repair work after Israeli airstrikes on July 7... and areas around the port and fishing boats".

An Israeli military statement said that the targets included "engineering vehicles... fuel containers, naval vessels used for military activities" against Israel and "additional terror infrastructure used by the Huthi terrorist regime".

It said the port had been used to transfer weapons from Iran, which were then used by the Huthi rebels against Israel.

The statement added that Israel had identified efforts by the Iran-backed rebels to "re-establish terrorist infrastructure at the port".

The Huthis recently resumed deadly attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, targeting ships they accuse of having links to Israel.



The Huthis have reverse-engineered and indigenously produced long-range ballistic missiles and armed drones, such as the Qasef-2K drone, which they have used in attacks across the Arabian Peninsula—even reaching targets in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, hundreds of kilometres away. This has made them a rare example of a non-state actor with strategic strike capabilities.

## Alaska Airlines resumes flights after 'IT outage'

Washington, United States

Alaska Airlines said yesterday it had resumed operations after hours earlier requesting its fleet be grounded because of an "IT outage."

The airline apologized for the disruption, and urged travelers to check their flight status before heading to the airport -- adding it "will take some time to get our overall operations back to normal".

The airline earlier told AFP it "experienced an IT outage that's impacting our operations" and that it had "requested a temporary, system-wide ground stop for Alaska and Horizon Air flights until the issue is resolved."

Before the grounding was lifted, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) status page showed all destinations affected by the halt of Alaska's mainline aircraft.

"We apologize for the inconvenience," Alaska Airlines said in a statement.

"As we reposition our aircraft and crews, there will most likely be residual impacts to our flights."

## India court acquits 12 in deadly 2006 train blasts case

AFP | Mumbai, India

An Indian court acquitted on Monday 12 men previously convicted for a series of bomb blasts that ripped through packed commuter trains in Mumbai in 2006 that killed 187 people.

The men were convicted in 2015 of murder, conspiracy, and waging war against the country over the attacks during the evening rush hour of July 11, 2006 that also injured more than 800 people.

Five were sentenced to death, while the other seven were given life imprisonment.

But, 10 years later, the Bombay High Court set aside a lower court's verdict and acquitted the 12 men.

Justices Anil Kilar and Shyam Chandak said in their judgement, the prosecution had "utterly failed to establish the offence beyond the reasonable doubt against the accused on each count". The men were ordered to be released from jail "if they are not required to be detained in any other case".

The prosecution can appeal against the order in the Supreme Court.

A total of seven blasts ripped through the trains after the bombs, packed into pressure cookers, were placed in bags



and hidden under newspapers and umbrellas.

Prosecutors said the devices were assembled in Mumbai and deliberately placed in first-class coaches to target the city's wealthy Gujarati community.

They said the bombings were intended as revenge for the riots in the western state of Gujarat in 2002, which left

some 2,000 people dead, most of them Muslims.

Prosecutors accused Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba of being behind the attacks, although a little-known outfit called the Lashkar-e-Qahhar later claimed responsibility.

Pakistan denied the allegations.

## Taliban must release sick, elderly British couple: UN experts

Geneva, Switzerland

UN experts warned Monday that an elderly British couple detained for months by the Taliban authority in Afghanistan could die without access to medical treatment and demanded their immediate release.

Peter Reynolds, 80 and his wife Barbie, 75, have been "arbitrarily detained in Afghanistan without charges" since February, the five independent United Nations experts said.

The two, who married in Kabul in 1970 and have lived continuously in Afghanistan for nearly two decades, "have been held for over five months, including in a maximum-security facility for several months and later in underground cells, without sunlight", the experts said.

"Their physical and mental health is deteriorating rapidly," they said, warning that "without access to adequate medical care, they are at risk of irreparable harm or even death".

## US envoy says Hezbollah disarmament up to Lebanon

Beirut, Lebanon

Visiting US envoy Tom Barrack said Monday that disarming Hezbollah was a domestic issue, as Washington presses the new authorities for action after the group was weakened by war with Israel.

"The Hezbollah disarmament... is something that is so internal," Barrack told a press conference in Beirut after meeting Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, adding that if it didn't happen it would be "disappointing".

Lebanese leaders who took office in the aftermath of more than a year of hostilities in-

cluding two months of open war between Israel and Hezbollah have vowed a state monopoly on bearing arms, while demanding Israel comply with a November ceasefire.

Barrack said the November cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah "didn't work".

"America is not here to compel Israel to do anything. We're here to use our influence to bring calm minds together to come to a conclusion," he added.

Last month, Barrack asked Lebanese leaders to formally commit to disarming Hezbollah.