

January 16, 2024

A large crowd of armed men, many wearing headscarves, holding up Syrian flags and shouting slogans. A banner in the background reads "الله أكبر" (Allahu Akbar) and "استوت لأمريك" (I stood against America).

[illegible]

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death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory to Islam.”

While the Houthis have been attacking neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for years, they now rise above a strictly local menace, since they threaten to decimate global trade, creating losses of billions of dollars.

Given the tepid U.S. and Western response to this growing Houthi threat heretofore, we should wonder if these allies will seriously follow through. Do they have the determination to neutralize the Houthi—and Iranian—threat definitively?

The October 7th massacre proved that Hamas could not be deterred by simple containment. Ultimately, Israel had to go on the offensive and remove the terrorist group from its midst.

Similarly, the Houthis will not be deterred by defensive efforts. The U.S. and its allies will surely need to take continued military action to show them and Iran there is a heavy price to pay for destabilizing the world’s economy.

Failure by the West to exact a high, painful cost on the Houthis will only encourage Iran to expand its efforts to seize greater hegemony in the Middle East at the expense of the U.S. and its allies.

The Houthis already have a history of endangering U.S. allies in the region, as well as the world economy. They have been attacking Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates since the 2010s. In fact, the Houthis have launched more than 1,000 attacks against Saudi Arabia in recent years.

Targets have included the capital Riyadh, airports and oil installations. In September 2019, Houthi attacks resulted in Saudi Arabia losing about half its output capacity, which is significant, as the Saudis supply 13% of the world’s oil.

The Houthis have the ability to inflict major damage to Israel and the global economy. They have repeatedly launched drones and missiles at Eilat, Israel’s southern port. As a result, Eilat has seen an 85% drop in activity, according the port’s chief executive. By attacking ships bound for Israel, the Houthis can severely damage the Jewish state’s economy as 99% of goods (in terms of cargo volume) reach Israel by sea.

Many of the Houthi assaults on ships have occurred in the Bab el-Mandeb strait, which ships traveling between Europe and Asia must traverse unless they take the much longer, alternative route around southern Africa. Some 15% of global commerce flows through Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal daily, including 30% of container traffic. Some 20% of the world’s oil also travels through Bab el-Mandeb. It is estimated that if the Houthis were to close the Bab el-Mandeb strait entirely, the global economy would lose \$6 billion a day.

The Houthis have already made shipping costs and insurance premiums skyrocket. According to the International Chamber of Shipping, 20% of the world’s container ships are avoiding the Red Sea. A senior U.S. military official said that the Houthi attacks on shipping were at a scale not seen in “two generations.”

The Houthis’ actions in the Red Sea bear Iran’s signature. The Houthis are part of the “Axis of Resistance,” a term denoting all of Iran’s proxies in the Middle East, including Hamas and Hezbollah. The leaders of the proxy groups have claimed in interviews that their close coordination with each other today is unparalleled.

Proxies like the Houthis are part of Iran’s strategy of attacking its enemies, while simultaneously avoiding direct involvement in conflict that could lead to a regional war. Yet Iran clearly provides the weapons and intelligence the Houthis use to attack ships in the Red Sea.

Until last week’s attack on targets in Yemen, the Western response to Houthi belligerence has been half-hearted. Biden has also prevented Israel from attacking the terrorist group. Moreover, ironically, shortly after his election, President Biden removed the Houthis from the U.S. State Department’s Foreign Terrorist Organizations list.

Belatedly, last month, Biden announced the creation of an alliance of countries to protect Red Sea shipping. But notably, this alliance *excludes* key Arab allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and of course, Israel. While recent U.S. and U.K. military strikes on Friday and Saturday hit some 60 targets in 28 sites, it’s unclear how seriously the Houthis’ military capability was

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damaged—and the group threatened retaliation.

One thing is clear: The Houthis—and Iran—will continue their belligerent actions as long as the U.S. and Western allies do not stop them. It's time for America and friends to continue what they started last week—painful, punishing response to all terror attacks against U.S. interests by the Islamic Republic and its proxies anywhere in the Middle East.

Please make the point when speaking with family, friends, colleagues—or in letters to the editor—that the only way to stop the Houthis from wreaking havoc on the global economy is to completely disable their military assets. What's more, the U.S., Israel and our Western allies must make clear to Iran by forceful actions that we will not tolerate its continued imperialist expansion and threats to the global economy.

Best regards,

James Sinkinson, President

Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. The events of October 7 have changed our world forever—and especially the world for Israel and the Jewish people. Likewise, the words “Never Again” will never be the same for us. October 7 has shown us that despite all promises of equity and commitments against hate on campus and on our streets, we can never depend on it. We will likely never be free of the scourge of antisemitism, fueled by the most outrageous slanders. I hope you'll agree that we opponents of Hamas and its savage massacre—and of all who support Hamas, against all humanitarian values—need to speak out. FLAME's new *hasbarah*—explanatory message —“**Enemies of Israel Tell Five Big Lies**”—refutes today's most vicious lies against Israel and the Jewish people. I hope you'll review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which FLAME intends to publish in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Star Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Harris and President Biden. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to **support us** with a donation.

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