

SPECPOL

## The Questions of Yemeni Pirates in the Red Sea

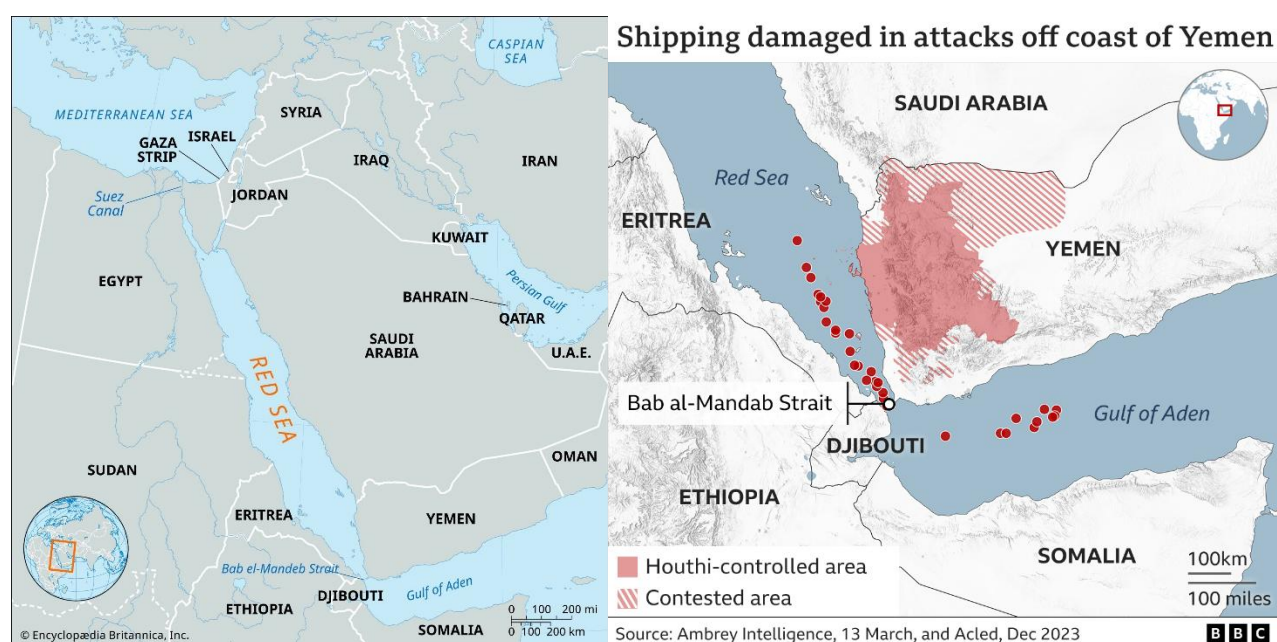


**Committee:** SPECPOL

**Topic:** The Question of Yemeni pirates in the Red Sea

**Chair:** CAROLYN PUN & ALISHA LIMBU

## Summary



The issue of Yemeni pirates in the Red Sea stems from the Houthi's (also known as Ansar Allah) takeover of Yemen in 2014 and began with threats in October 2023 of their intervention on behalf of Palestinians against Israel and in November, announced they would attack passing Israeli ships in the Red Sea. Piracy in the Red Sea consists of the hijacking of ships for ransom by this rebel group, targeting commercial vessels that pass through the Red Sea, a major trade route between Europe and Asia, with 12% of world shipping passing through here. Pirates often target vessels moving through the Sea as a strategic move. The Houthi movement is involved in this situation due to its control of key coastal areas of Yemen including the Bab el-Mandeb Strait – one of the world's most important shipping checkpoints. This is a significant issue for all countries as it affects global trade, a major source of income for many. Iran-backed Houthi forces started these attacks on 19 November 2023. Since then, over 2000 ships have diverted routes away from the Red Sea, having large economic implications as they take costlier trips now. Houthi-aligned Yemeni Armed Forces spokesperson announced "We will target any ships heading to Israeli ports in the Mediterranean Sea in any area we are able to reach". The EU launched its own naval mission on 19th February 2024, aiming to protect cargo ships in the Red Sea, with France, Germany, Belgium and Italy planning to aid this.

## Definition of Key Terms

Pirate – a person who robs or commits illegal violence at sea or on the shores of the sea

Red Sea – a sea inlet of the Indian Ocean, extending northwest between Africa and Arabia, connected to the Mediterranean by the Suez Canal

Houthi movement (Ansar Allah) – Zaydi Shia Islamist political and military organisation emerging from Yemen in 1990s. Often referred to as rebels and has links to Iran. Took control of Yemen's capital, Sana'a.

Bab-el-Mandeb strait – It is also known as Gate of Tears which connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. It acts as a strategic link where most exports of petroleum and gas pass through.

## Major Countries / Organisations Involved

Yemen – Houthi's country of origin. Most attacks have taken place just off the coast of Yemen

Israel – enemy of the Houthi's whose ships they claim to target due to the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict

USA – recognises Houthi's as a terrorist group and led the Operation Prosperity Guardian coalition to protect Red Sea shipping from Houthi attacks

UK – led coalition air and missile strikes against Houthis with USA

Iran – accused of supplying arms to Houthis

Saudi Arabia – implemented naval blockade in 2015 to prevent Iran from supplying Houthis, causing tensions between the two countries.