

Proscribing Ansar Allah (Houthis): An Urgent Imperative for UK Security and Values

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Britain today faces a stark moral and security test. An armed extremist movement – the Houthi insurgency of Yemen (officially *Ansar Allah*) – openly chants “*Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews*”¹ while raining missiles on civilian targets beyond its borders. In early May 2025, a Houthi ballistic missile struck near Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport outside Tel Aviv, sending plumes of smoke over runways and injuring innocent travelers.² That audacious attack on a sovereign nation’s main airport exemplifies the *global reach and brazen brutality* of the Houthi movement. It is intolerable that such a group remains *legal* in the United Kingdom. This briefing urges policymakers to immediately proscribe the Houthi movement under the Terrorism Act 2000 – a long-overdue step to defend British values, allies, and national integrity. In the morally urgent spirit of Bernard-Henri Lévy, we must recognize that *to spare the Houthis a terrorist designation is to indulge barbarism under the false guise of political nuance*. We owe better to our principles, our security, and our societal values.

Recent Houthi Attacks on Israeli and International Targets

The Houthi insurgents have rapidly escalated from a local Yemeni rebellion into a transnational threat. Their leaders in Sana’a – armed and enabled by Iran – now deliberately target countries far beyond Yemen’s borders, striking civilian infrastructure and international shipping with impunity.

Missile Strike on Ben Gurion Airport (May 2025)

On 4 May 2025, as Israeli families and international visitors crowded Ben Gurion Airport, air-raid sirens wailed and chaos ensued. A long-range missile launched by the Houthis evaded Israel’s defenses and exploded near Terminal 3, gouging a crater “tens of metres” wide³, littering runways with debris, and injuring at least eight people. Flights were halted, trains and roads closed, and panicked travelers rushed for shelter. This was *not* a lone incident: Israeli authorities report the Houthis have fired over two dozen missiles and drones at Israel in recent weeks, acting on their vow that Israel’s main airport is “no longer safe for air travel”. Most incoming projectiles are intercepted, but the Houthis have proven they can occasionally penetrate Israel’s defenses – even striking Tel Aviv itself in late 2024.³ The Ben Gurion attack marks the first direct hit on the airport and one of the most serious long-range attacks on Israel in its modern

¹ Lee Harpin, “Palestine Protestors Chant in Support of Houthi Rebels,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 14, 2024, <https://www.thejc.com/news/palestine-protestors-chant-in-support-of-houthi-rebels-t3rlbac1>.

² Dragana Jovanovic and Jordana Miller, “Houthi Missile Strikes Near Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport, Injuring 8, Israel Says,” *ABC News*, May 4, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/houthi-missile-strikes-tel-avivs-ben-gurion-airport/story?id=121443287>.

³ Mustafa Abu Ganeyeh, “Missile Fired by Yemen’s Houthis Lands Near Israel’s Main Airport,” *Reuters*, May 4, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-military-says-working-intercepting-missile-launched-yemen-2025-05-04/>.

history. Yemeni Houthi commanders openly cheered this terror strike, boasting that the “missile hit the target” and threatening more to come.⁴ Israel’s government rightly called this an act of war.

Volleys Against Israel and Threats to Shipping

The Ben Gurion strike was only the latest in a concerted Houthi offensive spanning late 2023 to 2025. Since the outbreak of war between Hamas and Israel in October 2023, the Houthis have dramatically “intensified missile launches at Israel,” claiming to act in “*solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza*.” In truth, this is Iran’s hand at work (as discussed later), using the Houthis to *strategically widen* the conflict. Israeli intelligence notes the Houthis began targeting Israeli cities and Red Sea shipping in November 2023, during the Gaza war’s early days. Over roughly a year and a half, they have launched *hundreds* of projectiles. International crisis monitors report the Houthis have carried out *close to 500 attacks* on commercial shipping and on Israel since late 2023. Many were thwarted, but the volume of fire is staggering. In just 48 hours around the Ben Gurion incident, the Houthis claimed three separate missile launches toward Israel. They have repeatedly forced the diversion of flights and put millions of Israeli civilians under sirens. Make no mistake: these are *deliberate acts of terror* by a militia seeking to sow fear far beyond Yemen.

Attacks on International Shipping and US/UK Assets

Alongside Israeli targets, the Houthis have explicitly targeted international vessels and even Western military assets. In late 2023, as their missiles streaked toward Israel, a U.S. Navy destroyer intercepted multiple Houthi cruise missiles and drones over the Red Sea – projectiles that Pentagon officials said were *likely aimed at Israel or American forces* in the region.⁵ Houthi leaders have *declared the Red Sea a war zone*, vowing to strike any vessel “linked” to Israel, the United States, or the United Kingdom.⁶ They have made good on these threats: over 130 commercial ships were attacked by the Houthis in late 2023 alone, causing several vessels to be completely lost and killing at least four civilian seafarers.⁷ These indiscriminate assaults spanned the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea – *choke points of global trade* where British-flagged or British-crewed ships routinely sail. The Houthis have fired missiles at oil tankers, hijacked tugboats, and launched exploding drone boats at merchant fleets. Just days ago, the Houthi high command announced that *any* tanker carrying U.S. oil through the Red Sea will be attacked starting mid-May 2025, in retaliation for U.S. strikes on their bases. They specifically warned they would target

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⁵ USS Carney Intercepts Three Missiles Heading North Out of Yemen,” *Navy Times*, October 19, 2023, <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2023/10/19/uss-carney-intercepts-three-missiles-heading-north-out-of-yemen/>.

⁶ Yemen’s Houthis Launch Missiles at Israel, Army Says It Intercepts,” *Al Jazeera*, May 2, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/2/yemens-houthis-launch-missiles-at-israel-army-says-it-intercept>.

⁷ Houthis Resume Blockade on Israeli Shipping in Red Sea,” *Lloyd’s List*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.lloydslist.com/LL1152845/Houthis-resume-blockade-on-Israeli-shipping-in-Red-Sea>.

Western shipping companies and U.S.-linked vessels – a threat that implicitly includes allies like the UK. Indeed, British citizens are among the sailors, tourists, and expatriates put at risk by this maritime terror campaign.

Previous International Strikes

Even before their recent alignment against Israel, the Houthis demonstrated a willingness to strike foreign civilians. In January 2022, the group launched a deadly drone and missile attack on Abu Dhabi – the capital of the United Arab Emirates, one of Britain’s Gulf partners. Houthi drones slammed into fuel trucks and a storage facility, igniting explosions that killed three people (innocent workers from South Asia) and causing a fire near Abu Dhabi’s international airport. The UAE’s Foreign Ministry condemned the strike on civilian infrastructure as a *“terrorist attack by the Houthi militia on Emirati soil”*. It marked a new level of Houthi aggression, targeting a peaceful global business hub hundreds of miles from Yemen. The United Nations Security Council – including the UK – unanimously labeled the Abu Dhabi strike *“heinous”* and issued a formal statement condemning the Houthi terrorist attacks in the Emirates. This pattern has only worsened since: wherever Tehran’s strategic interests beckon, the Houthis are unleashed as an attack dog, regardless of civilian lives in the way.

In sum, the Houthis have escalated from a regional insurgency to a transregional menace. They have bombarded civilian airports, commercial shipping lanes, and foreign cities. They have caused injuries and chaos at a major international airport and deaths on the high seas. They deliberately seek out Israeli, American, British, and other international targets as part of a radical anti-Western jihadist vision. These are quintessential acts of terrorism: violence against civilians to advance a political and ideological cause. The UK’s Terrorism Act 2000 definition of terrorism is clearly met – indeed exceeded – by the Houthis’ recent conduct. The group’s own words leave no doubt: after the Ben Gurion strike, Houthi spokesman crowed that *“Israel’s main airport is no longer safe”* and urged more attacks; on their official TV they brag of targeting Tel Aviv with “hypersonic” missiles. Such unabashed celebration of terror cannot be ignored. Britain must respond with moral clarity and legal rigor, starting with proscription.

Legal Rationale: Meeting the Criteria for Proscription Under UK Law

Under British law, proscription is the official banning of an organisation for terrorism – a tool reserved for those groups whose activities threaten our society’s peace and security. The Terrorism Act 2000 empowers the Home Secretary to proscribe an organisation if “it commits or participates in, prepares for, promotes or encourages, or is otherwise concerned in terrorism.”⁸ By any objective measure, Ansar Allah (the Houthi movement) *amply fulfills* this statutory test:

⁸ “FACTSHEET: Proscription,” *Home Office in the Media*, September 15, 2023, <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/15/factsheet-proscription/>.

“Commits or participates in terrorism”

The Houthis have committed repeated and deliberate acts of terrorism, both within Yemen and far beyond its borders. Their indiscriminate missile and drone attacks are designed not simply to destroy, but to terrorise. Firing a ballistic missile at Ben Gurion International Airport—one of the busiest civilian hubs in the Middle East—is an act of terrorism in its purest form. The physical damage may have been contained, but the psychological impact was profound: flights were halted, thousands of travellers were forced to shelter, and the spectre of mass-casualty terror returned to global aviation. Similarly, their sustained and deliberate targeting of civilian vessels in international waters, along with repeated strikes on fuel depots, ports, and airports, constitutes violence pursued for political and ideological ends—acts that meet the UK’s legal definition of terrorism under the Terrorism Act 2000.

But their campaign of terror is not limited to external targets. Within Yemen, the Houthis have built a regime founded on fear and brutality. They have tortured political opponents, executed suspected dissenters, abducted aid workers, conscripted children, and used famine as a weapon of coercion. Their repression is systematic, not incidental; it is not the rogue behaviour of commanders on the ground, but the deliberate policy of a leadership that proudly claims responsibility for both domestic and international atrocities.

These are not isolated events, nor are they low-level insurgent attacks. The scale, coordination, and transnational nature of their operations mark the Houthis as a fully-fledged terrorist organisation. With hundreds of missiles and drones launched across borders, open declarations of genocidal intent, and a leadership that revels in the panic and disruption it causes, Ansar Allah clearly qualifies for proscription under UK law. This is not merely a question of regional stability—it is a matter of international security, national coherence, and moral clarity.

“Prepares for terrorism”

Intelligence and open-source evidence indicate the Houthis maintain a sophisticated military apparatus geared toward terror operations. They have received shipments of advanced weaponry (from guided missiles to kamikaze drones) and training, enabling these long-range attacks.⁹ Their military wing continuously tests and develops new means of striking distant enemies – for example, claiming to have used a new “hypersonic” ballistic missile in the recent Tel Aviv attempt. Such ongoing procurement, training and planning activities constitute preparation for terrorism on a significant scale. The UK has previously proscribed groups for far less advanced preparations. Ansar Allah’s *quasi-state* control in parts of Yemen unfortunately grants it resources (missile factories, ports for smuggling, etc.) that it harnesses for terrorist ends. This makes them *even more dangerous* – akin to Hezbollah’s state-within-a-state in Lebanon, which the UK fully proscribed in 2019 on account of its terror activities.

⁹ Kali Robinson, “Iran’s Support of the Houthis: What to Know,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 24, 2025, [https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/irans-support-houthis-what-know::contentReference\[oaicite:6\]{index=6}](https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/irans-support-houthis-what-know::contentReference[oaicite:6]{index=6})

“Promotes or encourages terrorism (including unlawful glorification)”

The Houthis are guilty not only of violent deeds but of ideology that glorifies and incites violence. Their official mantra, blared at rallies and printed on banners, is “God Is Great, Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam.” This explicit call for death and a “curse” upon an entire people (Jews) is tantamount to incitement of terrorism and genocide. It is difficult to imagine a more poisonous credo in the modern world. Such *unlawful glorification* of terror (criminalized by UK law since the Terrorism Act 2006) is routine for the Houthi leadership. When Yahya Saree, the Houthis’ military spokesman, bragged that Ben Gurion Airport was now unsafe and effectively celebrated a successful strike, he was encouraging terrorism. The Houthis relentlessly disseminate propaganda urging attacks on Israel, on Jews, and on Western interests – they frame their terror as a divinely sanctioned struggle. This promotion of terrorism not only radicalizes their own followers but has ripple effects globally (including potentially in the UK, as discussed below). The legal threshold of “encouraging terrorism” is easily satisfied by these public statements and the *culture of martyrdom and hatred* that Ansar Allah cultivates.

“Otherwise concerned in terrorism”

Beyond direct attacks and incitement, the Houthi movement has numerous links to other terrorist entities and advances a broader terrorist agenda orchestrated by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Being “concerned in terrorism” can include providing or receiving training, funding, or material support for terrorist aims. As outlined in the next section, the Houthis function effectively as part of Iran’s network of extremist proxies, coordinating with designated terrorist groups like Lebanese Hizballah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Weapons used by the Houthis – from rifles to ballistic missiles – are often Iranian-made or supplied. In return, the Houthis project Iranian power by threatening terror attacks on Iran’s enemies. This symbiosis places Ansar Allah squarely within the terrorist ecosystem that UK law targets. Indeed, the United States has categorized the Houthis as a *Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT)* group research briefings.files.parliament.uk, recognizing their role in fomenting terrorism beyond Yemen’s civil war. The British Parliament has heard testimony that the Houthis pose a “*significant threat to British interests*” due to these terrorist ties.¹⁰ To allow the Houthi movement freedom to operate (or be supported) in the UK while lesser groups are proscribed would be an unsustainable double standard.

Importantly, proscription decisions in the UK also weigh *discretionary factors* beyond the raw legal test. Let us consider these briefly in the Houthi context:

¹⁰ Joanna Dawson, *Proscribed Terrorist Organisations*, House of Commons Library Research Briefing SN00815, April 16, 2024, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN00815/SN00815.pdf>.

Threat to the UK or British Nationals

While the Houthis' current theatre of operations is the Middle East, they *have* directly threatened UK-linked targets. They declared British warships in the Red Sea as legitimate targets alongside American ones. They have struck international vessels that might well have UK nationals as crew or passengers. In one incident, they seized a UAE-flagged ship in 2022 that had international crew aboard – potentially including individuals from allied nations like the UK. Furthermore, by whipping up violent antisemitism (“Curse on the Jews”) they endanger British Jewish communities *indirectly*, by inspiring like-minded extremists everywhere. MI5 and CT Police in the UK cannot ignore a group whose hateful propaganda is but a click away online for any would-be radical. As Rehman Chishti MP noted in Parliament, Houthi actions “*pose a significant threat to British interests.*” This includes our citizens and diplomats in the Middle East (who could be caught in Houthi attacks) and our economic stake in safe global shipping lanes. In short, the Houthis *do* threaten the UK's security – if not mainland Britain directly, certainly our people overseas, our allies, and the international order we depend on.

Presence in the UK

Ansar Allah is not believed to have an overt organizational branch in Britain, but evidence of its influence and support on UK soil is growing (see next section for details). Houthi slogans have been chanted on the streets of London; their supporters have waved flags and carried signs at demonstrations here. There are credible allegations of fundraising and money laundering networks tied to Iran's support for the Houthis that run through London's financial system. The group's propaganda is available in English online and consumed by a niche of activists. Thus, while the Houthis may not have the formal presence in Britain of, say, al-Qaeda in the 2000s, they nonetheless have a footprint – one that could expand if unchecked. The statutory proscription framework explicitly asks whether an organisation has any extent of presence in the UK; in this case the presence is *ideological and financial* rather than paramilitary, but it is real. And once proscribed, *any* presence or support becomes actionable by law.

Need to Support International Community

The UK does not act in isolation against terrorism. Proscription of the Houthis would signal solidarity with partners like the United States, which in January 2024 announced it would designate the Houthis as a global terrorist entity in response to their attacks. It would align the UK with the international consensus that has condemned Houthi terrorism – from the UN Security Council's statements after the UAE attack to the global airlines that are now cancelling flights due to Houthi missile danger. Moreover, proscribing Ansar Allah would send an unmistakable message to Iran (the patron of the Houthis) that Britain will not tolerate Tehran's use of terrorist proxies. It complements our broader efforts to combat extremism, whether Sunni jihadism (e.g. ISIS) or Shia militancy. Failing to proscribe the Houthis, conversely, *isolates the UK* on this issue – even our usually cautious allies in the EU are increasingly alarmed by Houthi

aggression. Supporting the international community's fight against terrorism is one of the proscription criteria; here, that means joining allies in formally stigmatizing and restricting the Houthi movement.

In light of all these points, the legal rationale for proscribing the Houthis is crystal clear. They meet every criterion in the Terrorism Act 2000. The case is as strong as that for groups already banned, such as Hamas – which the UK proscribed in full in 2021 after recognizing that the previous distinction of its “military” vs “political” wing was artificial. Similarly, Ansar Allah styles itself as a political movement governing parts of Yemen, but its *actions* reveal it to be a unified terrorist entity. We must not allow legalistic hesitation or geopolitical complexity to cloud this basic fact. Proscription is not a sanction on a government or a people; it is a targeted tool against an organisation that uses terror as a tactic. The Houthis have chosen terror – thus inviting the full weight of UK counterterrorism law.

Ansar Allah's UK Footprint: Propaganda, Support Networks, and Influence

Though the Houthis operate in Yemen, the echoes of their ideology and support for their cause have reached Britain. The movement's toxic propaganda and Tehran-backed networks pose a subtler threat to the UK's social cohesion and law & order. It is vital to recognize these domestic aspects, as proscription will empower authorities to better tackle them:

Public Demonstrations and Chants

Shockingly, chants praising the Houthis' actions have been heard on the streets of London. On 13 January 2024, thousands marched in a pro-Palestine rally in central London – ostensibly for Gaza – but amid the crowd, some protesters broke into a chorus directed at the Houthis: *“Yemen, Yemen make us proud, turn another ship around.”* This disturbing slogan explicitly cheered on the Houthis' attacks on shipping (“turn another ship around”) – effectively glorifying Houthi terrorism in a UK public demonstration. Video footage from that day confirms the chant rippling through sections of the crowd. Protesters also held signs reading “Hands off Yemen” and banners suggesting *“Yemen supports Palestine”* – slogans that, in context, clearly signal alignment with the Houthi narrative that their missile strikes on Israel are part of the Palestinian “resistance.” It should alarm us all that a militant group's rallying cry – one that includes *“Death to Israel”* – found resonance openly in London. This is no ordinary political expression; it is the glorification of a proscribed act (attacking civilian ships and cities) and arguably falls under *unlawful encouragement of terrorism*. Yet because the Houthis themselves are not currently a banned organisation in the UK, police and prosecutors likely felt constrained in responding. Proscribing the Houthis will make such chants and displays plainly illegal – *and rightly so*. We did not permit chants of “long live al-Qaeda” or ISIS flags in our streets; we must hold Houthi supporters to the same

standard of zero tolerance. Britain's democratic integrity is undermined if we allow violent extremist ideologies to be celebrated under the cover of free expression. As Bernard-Henri Lévy might argue, *to tolerate the public cheering of evil is to become complicit in it*. We must draw a firm line.

Online Propaganda and Extremist Content

Houthi-run media outlets, such as *Al-Masirah TV*, broadcast propaganda globally via the internet and satellite. Their content – from battlefield footage to antisemitic sermons – can radicalize susceptible individuals anywhere. In the UK, there is evidence that pro-Houthi content has been circulated within certain extremist online forums. Researchers have noted that the Houthi slogan and imagery (like the green-and-red flag with their motto) have been shared by British users on Twitter and Telegram, often alongside broader pro-Iran or anti-Israel messages. During the 2023 Gaza conflict, Houthi leaders were valorised in some UK-based Islamist circles for “joining the fight” against Israel. This *cross-pollination of extremist propaganda* is dangerous:¹¹ it blurs the lines between Middle Eastern terror groups and can inspire *reciprocal radicalization*. For instance, a British Islamist already hostile to Israel might become further emboldened by Houthi missile attacks (since these seem to validate violent “resistance”). We have seen similar patterns before – e.g., how ISIS propaganda online drew recruits or how far-right terrorist manifestos circulate globally. The Houthis maintain an active information warfare strategy, and the UK is not immune to it. Proscription would allow UK internet providers and platforms to more readily remove Houthi content on the grounds of it being terrorist material. It would put *Al-Masirah* and affiliated social media pages on the same footing as ISIS's Dabiq magazine or Hezbollah's Al-Manar – blocked or taken down wherever possible. We must choke off the spread of Houthi hate propaganda before it finds footholds among extremist subcultures here.

University and Community Influence

Another facet of concern is the potential penetration of Houthi or Iranian extremist influence in UK educational and community settings. Iran's regime, which sustains the Houthis, has a history of attempting to radicalize or mobilize Shia diaspora communities abroad. The UK is home to a diverse Muslim population, including a minority from Yemen and many from broader Middle Eastern backgrounds. While the vast majority do not support the Houthis, we have seen reports of Iranian-linked community centres and student groups disseminating Tehran's talking points. For example, student societies at some British universities have invited speakers or screened films that portray the war in Yemen through the Houthi-Iran lens – often painting the Houthis as righteous “anti-imperialist” fighters while demonizing their enemies. Such narratives, if unchallenged, can create pockets of sympathy for Ansar Allah's cause among British youth. Already in early 2024, there were small rallies in London by British Yemenis and activists opposing Saudi Arabia's intervention in Yemen, where Houthi flags and slogans

¹¹ Mansour Al-Maswari, “Examining Houthi Manipulation and Populist Propaganda in the Wake of the October 7,” *Arabi Facts Hub*, December 17, 2024, <https://arabifactshub.com/ar/researches/details/43838>.

reportedly appeared.¹² What begins as political protest can bleed into overt support for a terrorist group when that group is not legally banned. Universities have a duty of care to prevent extremist recruitment on campus. By proscribing the Houthis, the government empowers universities and local authorities to intervene if Houthi-aligned groups attempt to spread their extremist propaganda under academic cover. It sends a clear signal that *Ansar Allah is beyond the pale* – not a legitimate “resistance movement” to be debated sympathetically, but a terrorist outfit to be shunned.

Funding Channels and London’s Financial Hub

Perhaps the most insidious UK link is the use of British financial networks to launder money and channel funds in support of the Houthis (and their patrons). Parliament was warned in 2023 that *“Iran has been using [UK-based] Lloyds and Santander accounts to evade sanctions,”* with *“front companies...funding the IRGC with hundreds of millions of dollars”* – funds that likely find their way to Iranian proxies like the Houthis. MP Layla Moran revealed an alarming scenario: *“money laundered [in London] is being used against our own troops by the Houthis.”* In other words, illicit finance coursing through the City of London might be helping to buy the very missiles that the Houthis fire at Western-backed targets (including potentially British forces deployed abroad). This is a grotesque irony – London as a piggy bank for those who attack UK interests – and it cannot continue. While criminal money laundering investigations are ongoing, a proscription of Ansar Allah would greatly aid financial enforcement: banks would be on clear notice that any accounts or transactions linked to Houthi entities or fundraising campaigns are *illegal*. Proscription makes it a criminal offense to *finance* the group in any way, triggering compliance measures in the banking sector. It also buttresses the case for using new powers under the *National Security Act 2023* to disrupt hostile state activity; as Security Minister Tom Tugendhat noted, those powers were designed to tackle exactly this type of malign foreign influence and financing. Additionally, there are reports that some charities raising humanitarian aid for Yemen have been infiltrated by Houthi sympathizers who divert a portion of funds to the rebel cause. Proscription will force greater due diligence on Yemeni aid flows from the UK, ensuring our charitable generosity is not misused to fuel a war machine. The financial front is one where Britain holds significant leverage (given our global banks) – proscribing the Houthis would help clamp down on the dollars and pounds that sustain their campaigns.

Ansar Allah’s reach into the UK is real and multifaceted, despite being less obvious than groups which have carried out attacks on UK soil. From the chants on our streets to the shadowy banking transactions behind closed doors, the signs of Houthi influence demand a proactive response. We cannot wait for a tragedy – such as a radicalized supporter committing violence in the UK, or British sailors killed by a Houthi attack at sea – to connect the dots. By banning the Houthis now, we preemptively cut off the channels through which their ideology and resources might spread here. This is about *defending Britain’s social harmony and rule of law*. No society can remain healthy when

¹² Maryam Zakir-Hussain and Holly Evans, “Thousands Attend Pro-Palestine Protest as Police Warn of Crackdown on Slogans,” *The Independent*, January 13, 2024, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/protest-palestine-gaza-police-arrest-b2478167.html>.

extremist actors abroad can openly win admirers and accomplices within its borders. Proscription is the firewall we must erect.

Ansar Allah: An Arm of Iran's Destabilising Agenda

The Houthi movement does not operate in isolation. It is a critical node in the Islamic Republic of Iran's network of proxy forces that spans the Middle East – a network which Iran uses to export its revolutionary ideology and undermine the international order. In calling for proscription of the Houthis, we must frame it within this larger strategic context: as part of *confronting Iran's destabilising influence* and protecting the UK from hostile state proxies.

Iranian Sponsorship of the Houthis

Since at least the mid-2010s, Iran's IRGC (specifically its Quds Force, the unit dedicated to foreign operations) has cultivated and supported the Houthi insurgency. Iranian support has dramatically boosted the Houthis' military prowess, enabling them to project force far beyond what a Yemeni militia could normally achieve. Tehran has supplied the Houthis with advanced weapons (from assault rifles up to ballistic missiles), technical advisors, and funding. In fact, analysts note that many of the Houthis' most sophisticated armaments – long-range drones, guided anti-ship missiles, etc. – are *either Iranian-made or built with Iranian know-how*. The result is that the Houthis have become, in the words of the Council on Foreign Relations, *"one of the Middle East's most potent nonstate actors"* due to Iranian sponsorship. Crucially, this patron-client relationship is ideological as well: the Houthis *esteem Iran's supreme leader and 1979 Islamic Revolution*, incorporating Iranian revolutionary slogans into their own doctrine. Their hateful motto is "Iranian-inspired", and their media often echoes Tehran's propaganda lines. Some experts label the Houthis *Iran's "willing partner"* rather than a mere proxy – but in practical terms, the distinction is moot. The Houthi war machine would sputter to a halt without IRGC smuggling pipelines and training. Conversely, with Iran's backing, the Houthis have been emboldened to strike at Iran's distant foes (Israel, Saudi Arabia, the US) in ways that serve Iran's strategic objectives.

A Proxy War on Multiple Fronts

For Iran's regime, supporting the Houthis is a low-cost way to bleed and distract its adversaries. By opening a front against Israel from Yemen, Iran stretches Israel's missile defense resources and forces it to worry about a third border (beyond Gaza and Lebanon). By threatening the Red Sea, Iran jeopardizes shipping routes that are vital to Western economies, thereby gaining leverage against the US and Europe. Tehran can officially deny direct involvement while enjoying the chaos sowed by its clients. This modus operandi is familiar – it mirrors how Iran uses Hezbollah in Lebanon (to menace Israel and dominate Lebanon's politics) and Shia militias in Iraq and Syria (to attack US/UK troops and undermine governments). The Houthis have essentially become *Iran's arm in the Arabian Peninsula*, just as Hezbollah is its arm in the Levant. The UK

government has grown increasingly vocal about Iran's hostile state actions, especially after Iranian agents plotted assassinations and kidnappings on UK soil in recent years. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly has condemned Iran's use of proxies to destabilize the region. Yet, while we have proscribed Hezbollah's entirety and several Iran-backed Iraqi militias, the Houthis remain *un-designated* – an anomaly that undermines a coherent policy on Iran. Proscribing the Houthis would reinforce Britain's stance that Iran's export of terrorism will be confronted on all fronts. It also synergizes with any future move to proscribe the IRGC itself, a step urged by many in Parliament. Indeed, by highlighting the Houthis as Iran-sponsored terrorists, we indirectly bolster the case that the IRGC – as their sponsor – is a terrorist entity as well.

Destabilising Regional (and Global) Security

The Houthi-Iran axis has had dire humanitarian and security consequences. The Yemen conflict ignited by the Houthi coup in 2014 became a multi-sided war that produced one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. While all sides share blame for human suffering, Iran's role in prolonging the war via arms transfers to the Houthis has been particularly pernicious (violating UN embargoes repeatedly). Beyond Yemen, the Houthis' expansion of hostilities to the Red Sea and Gulf region threatens international stability. The Red Sea is not just a regional waterway; it carries a significant percentage of global trade, energy shipments, and even UK trade with Asia. By mining these waters and attacking ships, the Houthis could create a ripple effect on the global economy – higher oil prices, disrupted supply chains – exactly at a time when the world is seeking post-pandemic stability. Furthermore, the specter of a Houthi-provoked direct conflict between Iran and Israel or the US has inched closer. In March 2025, the United States (under President Trump's new administration) felt compelled to launch *large-scale strikes against Houthi targets* in Yemen to deter their attacks on shipping.¹³ These American strikes killed hundreds in Yemen and mark the biggest US military operation in the Middle East in years – essentially a shadow war with Iran being fought on Yemeni soil. The UK, as America's principal ally, is inevitably drawn into these tensions. British Royal Navy assets have already assisted in maritime security in the Red Sea, and RAF flights help monitor Houthi missile launches. If this escalates, British forces could be at risk of Houthi retaliation – all at Iran's behest. By proscribing the Houthi movement, Britain makes a firm statement: *we see the hand of Iran behind these outrages, and we will not sit idle*. It aligns with our commitment to uphold freedom of navigation (a longstanding Royal Navy mission) and to protect our allies from Iran's meddling.

Domestic Security and Iran's Networks

Iran's destabilising work is not confined to the Middle East. Alarming, Iran has brought its campaign to UK soil through intimidation of dissidents and alleged plots to harm British citizens (particularly British-Iranian journalists critical of Tehran). The IRGC's operatives and proxies are being actively monitored by MI5. In that context, the Houthis

¹³ The Associated Press, "Houthi Missile Strike at Israel Airport Halts Flights Ahead of Key Vote on Gaza War," *NPR*, May 4, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/04/g-s1-64233/houthi-missile-halts-israel-flights>

represent *another vector of Iran's influence that could penetrate the UK*. Iran could conceivably leverage sympathetic Houthis or Yemenis abroad for espionage or influence operations in Britain. Proscription would empower security services to disrupt any nascent Houthi-affiliated networks before they take root. Additionally, by linking the Houthi proscription to Iran's hostile state activity, the government can utilize the new *Foreign Influence Registration Scheme* and Unexplained Wealth Orders (tools in the National Security Act) to go after those acting on behalf of IRGC fronts. It closes a loophole: right now, an individual in Britain can lawfully fly a Houthi flag or fundraise for "Yemeni resistance" without clearly breaking the law, which an Iranian agent might exploit to mask operations. Once the Houthis are proscribed, such activity would surface immediately as criminal or suspicious. In essence, it helps smoke out Iran's tentacles within our shores.

Framing the Houthi proscription as part of the battle against Iran's malign influence gives it a powerful strategic rationale. This is *not* about taking sides in Yemen's civil war arbitrarily; it is about confronting a transnational extremist network that begins in Tehran and ends with missiles in Tel Aviv and terror on the high seas. The Houthis are the *hand*, but Iran is the arm moving it. The UK must show that we will cut off that hand wherever it strikes. This broader policy perspective also underscores that proscribing the Houthis is one piece of a larger strategy – one that may include tightening sanctions on Iran, boosting maritime security deployments, sharing intelligence with regional partners, and building a coalition to counter Iranian proxies. The Houthis should be seen in the same category as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iraqi Shia militias – groups that *directly* threaten UK interests and international peace at Iran's behest. Each of these is either proscribed by the UK or under active consideration (the IRGC itself being debated). It is past time to add Ansar Allah to that list and thereby *complete the picture* of our response to Iran's destabilisation campaign.

Recommendations: Action Plan for UK Authorities

Britain must act with conviction and clarity. The following steps are urgently recommended to Her Majesty's Government and relevant authorities:

Immediate Proscription of the Houthi Movement (Ansar Allah)

The Home Secretary should lay an order proscribing Ansar Allah without delay, under Section 3 of the Terrorism Act 2000. This order should designate "Ansar Allah (also known as the Houthi movement)" as a *proscribed terrorist organisation*, citing its engagement in terrorism abroad that threatens international security and British interests. Parliament should be urged to approve this order on an emergency basis. This decisive step will send a clear message that the UK will *not* tolerate or legitimize a group that commits and glorifies terror. It aligns the UK with U.S. policy and our own values of opposing terrorism in all forms. Proscription will trigger an automatic criminalization of membership, support, and funding related to the Houthis in the UK, providing a strong deterrent against any overt activities here.

Enforcement: Monitor and Suppress Expressions of Support

Upon proscription, UK police and prosecutors must be directed to vigorously enforce the laws against supporting a terrorist organisation. This includes monitoring public events, campuses, and online spaces for Houthi flags, slogans, or propaganda. Under existing law, it will be an offence to *invite support* for the Houthis, to arrange meetings in support of them, or to display their logo/flag in a way that suggests affiliation. The Home Office should issue guidance to regional police forces to ensure they understand the symbols and rhetoric associated with the Houthis (e.g. their slogan, images of their leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the distinctive green text banners, etc.). Any *reckless expression of support* for the Houthis – be it a chant in a protest or a social media post praising their missile attacks – should be met with appropriate legal action. The aim is not to police free speech arbitrarily, but to draw the line at glorifying terrorism. Just as praising ISIS or Al-Qaeda can prompt investigation, so must praising Houthi terrorism. Organisers of demonstrations should be warned that allowing Houthi-support chants or banners could render them liable for aiding a proscribed organisation. Likewise, charities and NGOs must ensure no aid or resources they handle are diverted to Houthi-controlled entities, or they could face terror finance charges. Financial institutions should enhance screening to flag transactions linked to known Houthi front entities or fundraising campaigns. The UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU) should circulate intelligence on any such fronts so that banks can freeze accounts promptly. In essence, proscription opens the door – but enforcement is how we *close off the oxygen* to the group's supporters. The Crown Prosecution Service and courts should be ready to prosecute violators, to make an example that support for this antisemitic, violent movement has *no place in the UK*.

Expand Counter-Extremism Strategies to Iran-aligned Proxies

The UK's counter-extremism and counter-terrorism strategy (including the Prevent program and MI5's monitoring priorities) should be updated to explicitly include Iranian state proxies like the Houthis as a category of concern. For too long, our focus has understandably been on Sunni jihadism (ISIS, Al-Qaeda) and domestic far-right extremism. Meanwhile, Shia extremist networks linked to Iran operated on the periphery of our awareness. The events of the past two years – Iran-backed terror plots in the UK, Hezbollah's activities, and now Houthi supporters emerging – illustrate that Iran-backed extremism warrants greater attention. The Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism should develop a plan to identify UK-based individuals or groups disseminating Iranian revolutionary propaganda (such as the Houthi slogan or IRGC propaganda) and bring them into the Prevent program where appropriate. University campuses with significant Middle East studies or Islamic societies should be given guidance to look out for signs of pro-Iran radicalisation, just as they do for Salafist-jihadist radicalisation. This may involve closer scrutiny of events discussing the Yemen conflict – ensuring they are not platforms for Houthi propaganda under academic guise. The Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) in the Home Office could commission counter-narrative content to expose the truth of Houthi atrocities and Iran's role, to undermine the militant halo that their supporters try to project. Furthermore, intelligence efforts should prioritize

mapping any *nodes of support or financing in the UK* linked to the IRGC's proxy network – whether that is charities, religious centres, or business ventures being used as cover. A concerted push is needed to identify and disrupt these networks. This might also include working with our European allies, since Iran's proxy support networks are transnational (e.g. funds raised in one country move through another). By broadening our counter-extremism lens, we ensure groups like the Houthis cannot slip under the radar simply because they originate from a different branch of extremist ideology. All forms of terrorism are equally condemned by British policy; our operational focus must reflect that.

Coordinate a Broader Strategy on Iranian Proxies

Finally, use the proscription of the Houthis as a springboard for a wider government strategy to counter Iran's influence networks in the UK and abroad. This could take the form of a cross-departmental task force (involving the Home Office, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Ministry of Defence, and Treasury) to target Iranian proxy operations. Such a task force would harmonize actions like: applying further Magnitsky-style sanctions on individuals who facilitate the Houthis and other proxies; boosting support to regional partners under threat from these groups (e.g. providing Israel and Gulf states with better defenses against Houthi missiles, perhaps even deploying Royal Navy assets to escort ships in threatened waterways); pressing social media companies to ban accounts linked to IRGC propaganda; and accelerating designation of other Iran-backed groups if evidence warrants (for instance, reconsidering the status of certain *Iraqi militia groups* that are not yet banned). The proscription of Ansar Allah should be one piece of a cohesive policy that recognizes Iran's hand in multiple security threats. In Parliament, policymakers should frame the Houthi ban as part of standing up to *Iranian aggression and terrorism*. This will build public understanding that our action is not an isolated gesture about a faraway war, but a necessary move to protect the UK and uphold international law in the face of a systematic challenge by a hostile regime. It will also reassure our allies – from Washington to Riyadh to Jerusalem – that Britain is fully engaged in countering the threats that emanate from Iran's expansionism. As a world leader and permanent UN Security Council member, the UK has a *responsibility* to counter threats to global peace. Dismantling the Iranian proxy network is emerging as one of the key security imperatives of our time, and dealing firmly with the Houthis is a logical next step in that campaign.

Conclusion

Let us state it plainly: proscribing the Houthi movement is not a procedural nicety—it is a moral and strategic imperative. The Houthis, or Ansar Allah, have made their case against themselves with fire and blood. They have fired missiles at international airports packed with civilians, broadcast genocidal slogans targeting Jews, and pledged fealty not to the Yemeni people they claim to defend, but to an expansionist, sectarian theocracy in Tehran. They are not freedom fighters. They are the armed agents of the

Islamic Republic's imperialist ambitions—a proxy whose reach now extends from Sana'a to Tel Aviv and whose ideology is soaked in hatred.

Yet the full measure of their barbarism lies not only in the threat they pose to Israel or international shipping lanes, but in the devastation they have wrought upon their own country. In Yemen, they have conducted mass arrests, tortured dissidents, silenced journalists, and recruited child soldiers in defiance of international law. They have turned hospitals and mosques into military assets, used famine as leverage, and created a reign of fear that has crushed civil society. These are not isolated abuses—they are systemic and ideological. They reflect the worldview of a group that does not recognise the rule of law, democratic governance, or the value of human life outside its sectarian calculus.

For the United Kingdom to continue tolerating this group's political and propaganda apparatus on British soil is an affront to our national values and legal commitments. We did not hesitate to ban Al-Qaeda in the wake of 9/11. Nor did we flinch when the Islamic State broadcast its horrors across the Levant. Hezbollah, too, was finally proscribed when its violent double-game became impossible to deny. To exempt the Houthis now—despite their open calls for genocide and their proven acts of international terror—is not only a double standard. It is a dereliction.

Proscribing Ansar Allah will carry tangible benefits. It will enable British authorities to disrupt support networks, prosecute those providing material assistance, and counter domestic radicalisation. It will align our national stance with our allies, particularly the United States, which has already designated the group as a terrorist organisation. But above all, it will send a clear message: that Britain is not—and will never be—a sanctuary for violent extremism masquerading as political resistance.

At stake is not only the security of Israel or the future of Yemen, but the moral coherence of the democratic world. The Houthi movement, as it exists today, is a dagger aimed at the heart of that order—a conveyor of chaos, sponsored by a regime that thrives on destabilisation and death. If we fail to act, we embolden every group that traffics in terror and teaches that violence yields impunity. If we act decisively, we uphold the best traditions of Britain: principled, resolute, and unwavering in defence of liberty and law.

In the words of Edmund Burke, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Let it not be said that Britain looked away as a cry of "Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews" echoed across our streets and airwaves. Let it be said instead that we rose to our duty—banning the Houthis, standing with our allies, and standing up for the values of peace, justice, and democratic order.

The time for ambiguity has passed. The government must move swiftly and confidently to proscribe Ansar Allah. In doing so, we will reaffirm that the United Kingdom remains—without hesitation—on the side of what is right.

