



مركز اليمن والخليج للدراسات  
YEMEN & GULF CENTER FOR STUDIES

February 2024

# Developments in the Yemeni scene

Prepared by the Yemen & Gulf Centre for Studies



[www.ygcs.center](http://www.ygcs.center)



[info@ygcs.center](mailto:info@ygcs.center)



00967718444070  
00967773222566

اليمن - عدن 

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## *Comprehensive Yemen Report*

Through its qualitative monthly publication, “Developments in the Yemeni Scene,” the Yemen and Gulf Centre for Studies addresses the most prominent developments related to the Yemeni issue throughout the month. This includes comprehensive political, security, and economic coverage, along with external interactions. The centre’s primary objective is to propose more profound approaches for effective handling of the complexities of the Yemeni file. This ensures, on the one hand, the provision of scientific material to all those concerned, including decision-makers, researchers, and journalists, in the Yemeni file so that it can be used in following up on this file or the process of making and rationalising policies, and on the other hand, contributing to keeping pace with developments in Yemen. Up to date, along with other research publications produced by the Centre.

In dealing with developments in the Yemeni scene over the month, the monthly report of the Yemen and Gulf Centre for Studies adopts a “systematic monitoring and analysis” approach. This entails identifying the most prominent political, security, economic, and foreign developments witnessed by the Yemeni file over the month. These developments are then thoroughly analysed within the report and incorporated into the centre’s broader research outputs, which include analyses, reports, and assessments of the situation.

### *Executive Summary*

In February 2024, Yemen witnessed several diverse and multidimensional developments that clearly expressed the path of the Yemeni crisis in the current era.

Despite the significant importance of security developments, particularly in response to the Houthi escalation in the Red Sea region following the al-Aqsa Flood Operation in October 2023, the Yemeni landscape has also experienced notable political events. These revolved around key trends, including the appointment of a new prime minister and heightened activities of the UN envoy to Yemen, focusing on resolving the Yemeni peace file. Additionally, human rights violations perpetrated by the Houthis persisted, and significant indicators emerged suggesting divisions within the Houthi camp. In February, the Houthi strategy persisted, characterised by exploiting the ongoing escalation in the Red Sea to strengthen their position and consolidate support on the domestic front.

In terms of security, Yemen experienced significant events centred on developments in the security landscape of the Red Sea stemming from the Houthi escalation. These included the persistent Houthi attacks on maritime navigation in the Red Sea and the adoption of specific escalation patterns. Moreover, the United States and Britain intensified their military operations against the Houthis, contributing to the increasing militarisation of interactions in the Red Sea.

Numerous indicators have surfaced internally, highlighting Yemen’s ongoing struggles, particularly in the southern regions, where terrorist threats persist. Economically, Yemen faced various developments centred on the country’s economic crisis, further exacerbated by the consequences of the escalation in the Red Sea. This escalation directly impacted the national economy and caused considerable damage to several key economic sectors, including the fishing industry.

External interactions in the country highlighted a predominant focus on addressing the Houthi escalation in the Red Sea region at the international level. This focus has diverted attention from the broader issues of finding a political solution to the Yemeni crisis and effectively addressing the country’s unprecedented humanitarian challenges.

## The most prominent main trends in the Yemeni political scene in February 2024, can be discussed as follows:

### A new prime minister facing multiple challenges 1

On February 5, a decision was made by the Yemeni Presidency Council to designate Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak as the Prime Minister and appoint Abdul Malik Saeed as an advisor to the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council. The Council further announced its decision regarding the Cabinet's status on X, confirming that government members would persist in carrying out their responsibilities as outlined in their respective appointment decisions. The regional aspect stands out as the paramount factor for selection, aligning with the Riyadh Agreement signed in 2019 between the legitimate government and the «Southern Transitional Council.» This agreement dictated an equal distribution of government positions between the North and the South, a division that extended to the formation of the Presidential Leadership Council in 2022. Members of the Presidential Leadership Council reached a unanimous agreement that the new prime minister should hail from the southern regions. This consensus is particularly noteworthy given that the leading positions of the state, including the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, Prime Minister, and Governor of the Central Bank, are presently held by individuals from the northern governorate of Taiz. The appointment of the new prime minister occurs amid many challenges, with prominent issues including the significant economic crisis, the Houthi escalation in the Red Sea, and the prolonged political crisis that has persisted for years.



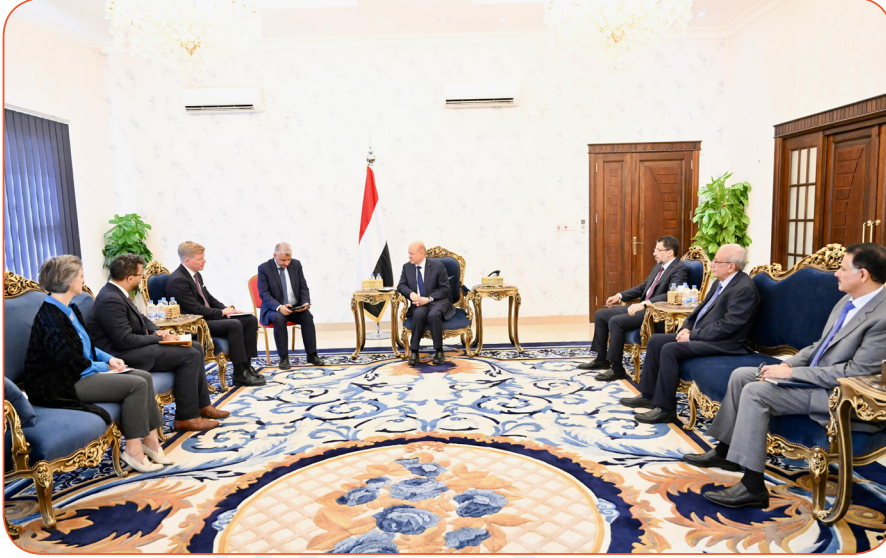
**Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak**



**Moen Abdul Malik Saeed**



## 2 Intense actions of the UN envoy to Yemen



February witnessed intense actions of the UN envoy to Yemen. On February 10, the Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Mohammed al-Alimi, and Prime Minister, Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, welcomed the United Nations Special Envoy, Hans Grundberg, in Aden. This meeting followed Grundberg's recent tour, which included visits to Riyadh, Tehran, and Abu Dhabi. During his tour, Grundberg engaged in discussions with officials from these nations, focusing on collaborative efforts to find a comprehensive political solution to the Yemeni crisis. The Yemeni Legitimacy Front seems to be emphasizing a «trust test» for the Houthis, calling for a series of moral measures to advance the peace process in Yemen. This includes crucial steps such as lifting the siege on the city of Taiz, removing restrictions on the movement of money, goods, and employees' salaries, and stopping their military escalation, their attacks on civilian facilities and objects, and their gross violations of human rights.

As part of his intensive movements, the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Hans Grundberg, visited, on February 12, the city of Taiz, southwest of Yemen, as part of his tour inside the country, where he met several officials. Grundberg held discussions with Nabil Shamsan, the Governor of Taiz, along with various local authority officials and party leaders in the governorate. The meeting focused on the ongoing developments in the region and Grundberg's efforts to advance peace. Additionally, they addressed the humanitarian initiatives he is spearheading, with a specific emphasis on breaking the nine-year-long siege imposed by the Houthi Ansar Allah group on the city of Taiz. Moreover, on February 11, the UN envoy visited the coastal town of Mokha, western Yemen, and met with Presidential Council member Tariq Saleh, where Grundberg stressed "the need to maintain calmness on the frontlines in Yemen as well as the need to create favourable conditions to reach a ceasefire throughout the country, implement economic measures, and resume a political process under the auspices of the United Nations," according to a statement issued by the Office of the UN Envoy.



## Continued Houthi restrictions on opponents 3

On February 17, the head of the so-called “Supreme Political Council” affiliated with the Houthi “Ansar Allah” group in Yemen, Mahdi al-Mashat, issued a law regarding the classification of countries, entities, and people hostile to the Republic of Yemen. The bill is intended to “Confront hostile actions and practices that affect the sovereignty of the Republic of Yemen and its independence from any state.” The bill consists of seven articles in three chapters. The first chapter encompasses the title, definitions, and objectives, whereas the second delineates the application of the law to countries deemed hostile to the Republic of Yemen. The foremost entity identified in this category is the Zionist enemy, along with any state or group engaging in hostile actions against the Republic of Yemen. This also extends to organisations and groups with antagonistic aims towards Yemen, as well as individuals involved in activities contrary to Islamic values. The third chapter details hostile acts and outlines the requisite measures to counteract them. The House



**Mahdi al-Mashat**

of Representatives in Sanaa, loyal to the Houthis, voted in an extraordinary sitting last week on the bill and approved its final form.

Nevertheless, numerous Yemeni political analyses and circles suggest that this law wasn't primarily designed as a response to the recent American measures against the group, including its classification on terrorism lists. Its impact on the United States is perceived as limited or negligible. Instead, the law is seen as a means to constrain political and intellectual dissent against the Houthis. In essence, it is expected to target Yemenis residing in areas under the group's control that do not align with its ideologies or political orientations.

In a connected context, the Houthi group «Ansar Allah» is actively working to enhance its control over Yemeni society in the regions under its dominance. This effort involves the establishment of a new security apparatus tasked with monitoring tribes and rural communities. This initiative comes in response to the escalating discontent and resistance against the group's influence and practices. These expressions of dissent occasionally manifest in individual and collective armed actions. As of February 20, reliable Yemeni sources have disclosed that the Houthi group plans to establish a new security apparatus, tentatively named the «community police.» This entity is anticipated to take on the responsibilities of overseeing tribal populations and rural communities. It is envisaged that the group will recruit individuals from the local populace and assign them tasks such as collecting information, conducting espionage, and monitoring tribal gatherings and events. One of the main tasks of the apparatus is to gauge public opinion about the group's influence, policies, and practices, monitor the people's movements, and write reports on all of this to its “Security and Intelligence Service.”



## 4 The escalation of the severity of Houthi human rights violations

February witnessed an increase in indicators of human rights violations committed by the Houthi “Ansar Allah” group.

On February 20, over four months since the arrest and detention of Abdul-Qawi al-Kumaim, the president of the Yemeni Teachers Club, and three of his colleagues, they were formally brought before a court specialising in terrorism and state security cases. The charges against them included accusations of inciting teachers to strike, demanding the restoration of salaries that had been withheld for eight years, and conspiracy with outside entities.

In the context of human rights violations, reports on February 25 accused the Houthi «Ansar Allah» group of recruiting more minors under the age of 15 in areas under its control, establishing new military training centres for school students in areas under its control, and forcing them to perform military parades. The Yemeni human rights organisation, «Mayon», reported in a statement issued that the group has established new military training centres for children in cities under its control to recruit thousands of them by forcing them to join it and fight on its fronts.



**The President Of The Yemeni Teachers Club  
Abdul-Qawi al-Kumaim**



### 5- Indications of divisions in the Houthi camp

In a surprising step on February 19, the so-called House of Representatives in areas controlled by the Houthi “Ansar Allah” group in Yemen approved the withdrawal of confidence from the Minister of Industry and Trade in the government. This decision coincided with a campaign led by several group leaders, accusing him of engaging in corrupt practices and illicit enrichment. Despite this step, it is not yet known whether the group will go to trial or whether it will suffice with this symbolic step. The entire government has been dismissed for six months, and the group’s leader has not succeeded in forming an alternative government. These unfolding events underscore the existence of profound rifts within the Houthi faction. On the one hand, these divisions are associated with internal disagreements within the Houthi component and, on the other hand, with the group’s incapacity to establish a new government. This is attributed to the refusal of numerous political parties in areas under the group’s control to participate in the government formation process. This reluctance stems from the constrained authority and the severe crises in these regions.







## 6- Growing Criticism from the Legitimacy Camp Towards the Houthis

The Yemeni legitimacy camp increased its criticism directed at the Houthis on multiple levels. Criticism from the legitimacy camp towards the Houthis has been notably focused on several key aspects. Primary among these is the accusation that the group bears responsibility for the militarisation of the Red Sea, leading to the current escalation and its subsequent consequences. Additionally, the legitimacy camp has pointed to the Houthis obstructing progress in the Yemeni peace process. This criticism was highlighted by the President of the Presidency Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, during his participation in the Munich Security Forum on February 18. Furthermore, Prime Minister Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak accused the Houthis on February 27 of exploiting the conflict in Gaza and the Red Sea escalation for internal gains. On February 28, the Yemeni government also accused international telecommunications companies of indirectly contributing to the Houthi group's targeting of the global telecommunications infrastructure. The Yemeni Ministry of Communications and Information Technology said that international telecommunications companies have persistently declined to cease their dealings with the Houthis, indicating that this step is «unjustified and irrational.» The Yemeni Ministry also revealed that the group receives about two billion dollars annually from the telecommunications sector, in addition to illegally exploiting state resources and significant revenues in the telecommunications sector to finance its activities for years.



## 7- The Continued Houthi Exploitation of the Escalation in the Red Sea

The Houthi “Ansar Allah” group continued to exploit the escalation taking place in the Red Sea region against the backdrop of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. This employment was conspicuous through various primary indicators, with particular emphasis on the recurrent statements and speeches delivered by the group’s leader, Abdul Malik al-Houthi (two speeches, one on February 15 and the other on February 29), the group’s spokesman, Muhammad Abdul Salam, and the group’s leader, Muhammad Ali Al-Houthi. These are the speeches and statements that



**Muhammad Ali Al-Houthi**

emphasised the connection of the escalation in the Red Sea to the Gaza war and demonstrated support and solidarity with the Palestinian people, with a focus on publishing allegations regarding the enormous losses caused by the Houthi operations. It was also noteworthy that the Houthis focused on calling for mass marches in support of the Palestinian people, which was embodied in the demonstrations that took place in the city of Taiz on February 9 and those that took place in al-Sabeen Square in the centre of the capital, Sana’a, on February 16, in what seemed to be an indication of the Houthis’ efforts to exploit the current escalation. To rebuild the popular bases and form a solid internal front.



**The principal trends illustrating security developments in Yemen throughout February 2024, can be summarised as follows:**

## 1 The Houthis persist in targeting ships

Despite Western operations and the formation of security alliances in the Red Sea, deterrence against the Houthis remains elusive. This was evident in the surge of maritime navigation targeting the Red Sea. In February alone, the Houthis launched 11 attacks, including strikes on southern Israel in Eilat, commercial and cargo vessels, and American and British warships in the region.



## 2 Houthis new qualitative tactics

In February, the Houthis introduced several novel tactics amid escalating tensions. Israeli reports on February 18 revealed attempts by «hostile parties» to seize control of communication networks. An incident involving an El Al plane en route from Phuket, Thailand, to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport, highlighted this, with the aircraft rerouted due to activity linked to the Houthi group in Yemen. Additionally, on the same day, the Houthis targeted and sank the cargo ship «RUBYMAR,» loaded with approximately 21 thousand tons of chemical fertilisers, including ammonia potentially utilised in explosives manufacturing, raising environmental concerns.

Furthermore, on February 23, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the group's leader, announced the deployment of «submarine weapons» in ship attacks, purportedly in solidarity with Palestinians during the Gaza war, hinting at heightened disruptions in the Red Sea. Finally, on February 26, international telecommunications company «SECOM» reported infrastructure issues in the Red Sea, affecting the cable system connecting Africa and Europe. Suspicions arose regarding Houthi activity in the area, suggesting a potential expansion of their targets to include communication infrastructure.



### 3- Escalation of American-British Targeting of Houthi Sites

Throughout February, the United States and Britain intensified their preemptive operations, focusing on precise targeting of Houthi sites within Yemen. The month witnessed a surge in such operations, with approximately 13 preemptive strikes by American-British forces against Houthi targets across various regions, including Sanaa, Hodeidah, Taiz, Hajjah, Al-Bayda, Dhamar in central and western Yemen, and Saada in the northwest. Notable among these strikes were the 15 airstrikes on February 5 and attacks on 18 Houthi targets on February 24. These strikes notably targeted Houthi weapons depots, missile launchers, and drones.

In addition to offensive operations, Western efforts focused on thwarting Houthi attacks.

On February 20, the French Ministry of Defense announced the interception and destruction of two drones launched from Yemen by French warships in the Red Sea. Similarly, on February 21, US and allied forces intercepted ten drones off Yemen's coast. The German Navy also downed two Houthi drones on February 28, marking its first such engagement.

Despite these efforts, doubts linger within Western circles regarding the effectiveness of American-British strikes in deterring the Houthis. On February 4, NBC News quoted experts questioning the efficacy of US strikes, describing them as engaging in a «cat and mouse» game with the Houthis. Experts highlighted the challenge of destroying all Houthi ballistic missiles and drones, given their dispersed storage across multiple Yemeni locations, including underground bunkers.



#### 4- Increasing «Militarisation» in the Red Sea

The security dynamics of the Red Sea have witnessed a pronounced rise in the trend toward «militarisation» amid escalating regional tensions. Two significant developments characterise this trend. On February 19, the European Union unveiled plans for a new naval force named «Operation Aspides,» derived from an ancient Greek term meaning shield or protection.

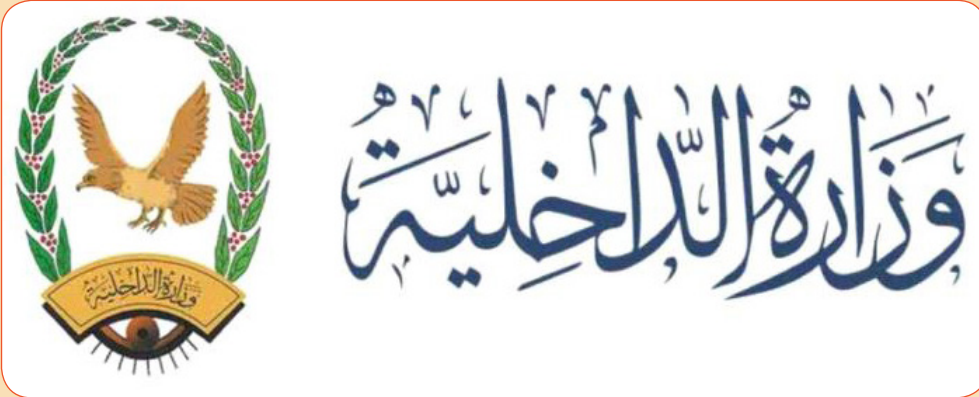


The operation, backed by a budget of approximately 8 million euros from the EU treasury, aims to establish patrols along vital maritime routes encompassing the Bab El-Mandab Strait, the Strait of Hormuz, and international waters in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and Gulf of Oman. Admiral Vassilios Geparis will serve as the operation's commander, with Rear Admiral Stefano Costantino leading the force from its headquarters in Larissa, Greece.

The formation of this force appears to be a response to mounting security threats in the Red Sea following Houthi escalations, with European energy security contingent upon the safety of sea lanes. The EU's initiative seeks to safeguard maritime navigation while aiming to de-escalate tensions, emphasising the defensive nature of the force's operations. However, challenges loom, including doubts over its capacity to deter Houthi attacks and concerns regarding coordination with existing security structures. Notably, on February 29, reports surfaced of a German frigate within the Aspides force nearly downing an American drone, underscoring coordination issues.

The second facet of militarisation involves bolstering the Chinese military presence in the Red Sea. The Chinese News Agency reported on February 24 the deployment of a naval fleet from Zhanjiang port in Guangdong Province, comprising the guided-missile destroyer Jiaozuo, the missile frigate «Xuechang,» and replenishment ship «Honghu,» along with over 700 personnel, including special forces and two helicopters. This deployment signifies China's increasing strategic interest in the region, particularly in safeguarding vital sea lanes and potentially influencing regional dynamics.





### 5- Persistent Terrorist Threats in Yemen

Throughout February, Yemen remained embroiled in terrorist threats. On February 28, the Yemeni Ministry of Interior, aligned with the legitimate government, disclosed the arrest of a «terrorist cell» plotting attacks in Al-Mahra Governorate, eastern Yemen. According to the government outlet «Saba,» security services in Al-Mahra successfully apprehended ten individuals planning terrorist activities across the governorate.

On February 29, Al-Qaeda operatives abducted three citizens in Shabwa Governorate, southern Yemen, identified as Saeed Mubarak Al-Taweel Al-Nasi, Ahmed Al-Khulaifi, and Aseel Al-Sulaimani, in the Khoura area of the Lower Markha District. This incident followed a previous kidnapping of a Yemeni army officer and his companion by Al-Qaeda in Shabwa Governorate, with the companion later released while the officer remained captive. These actions underscore Al-Qaeda's continued activity in southern Yemen, its strategic objectives of exerting pressure on both the legitimate government and the Southern Transitional Council, and its reliance on kidnapping and ransom as a means of funding.



Along with Yemen's intensive political and security developments in February 2024, the country experienced several critical economic developments. These developments were undoubtedly affected by those political and security developments mentioned above, and some were a reflection of them. These developments can be summarised as follows:

## 1 Significant Economic Fallout from Red Sea Escalation



The escalation instigated by the Houthis in the Red Sea has triggered a slew of adverse economic consequences, both domestically and internationally. Domestically, Yemen grapples with dwindling imports, a reduction in fuel supplies, and soaring import costs, translating into higher prices in local markets. Concurrently, Aden, the interim capital of the internationally recognised government, faces a resurfacing electricity crisis, with prolonged power outages amidst warnings of complete breakdowns in generating stations. These challenges coincide with the Central Bank of Yemen's initiation of the second tranche of the Saudi deposit, earmarked for financing vital imports like fuel, as Yemen heavily relies on imports for its necessities.

On February 8, humanitarian organisations operating in Yemen cautioned that escalating shipping costs and delivery delays, stemming from the military escalation in the Red Sea, pose a grave threat to exacerbating one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The United Nations World Food Program has already felt the impact of the escalation, compounded by US and British airstrikes targeting Houthi military assets. Similarly, the International Rescue Committee, another relief organisation in Yemen, noted significant delays in shipments of life-saving goods, including medicine, due to the heightened military activity. Anya Cowley, the IRC's policy, advocacy and communications coordinator for Yemen, emphasised the organisation's commitment to maintaining full-service capacity by utilising existing aid stocks. In tandem, Dalila al-Mahdawi, the media officer at the International Committee of the Red Cross in Yemen, underscored the persistent severity of the humanitarian crisis.



Additionally, events unfolding in the Red Sea, Bab El-Mandab, and the Gulf of Aden have contributed to a contraction in Yemeni oil production. Average daily oil output dwindled from 61,600 barrels in 2021 to below 50,000 by the end of 2022. Consequently, the World Bank anticipates a 0.5 percent economic contraction in Yemen for 2023, a stark reversal from the 1.5 percent growth witnessed in 2022. The public finance deficit is expected to hover around 2.9 percent of GDP in 2023.

Moreover, challenges such as currency fluctuations, surging inflation, and escalating social unrest have dampened the performance of non-oil economic sectors. Pressures on public finances have intensified, particularly in regions under the control of the internationally recognised Yemeni government. Experts attribute this primarily to the decline in Yemeni oil exports, evident from the significant drop in government revenues during the first half of 2023, indicating a potential 40% decline for the year. This downturn is primarily attributed to the contraction of the oil sector and reduced customs revenues due to diverted imports away from the port of Aden.

In a related development, Reuters cited economic analysts on February 2, highlighting a growing trend of companies redirecting grain shipments away from the Suez Canal due to continued attacks on ships in the Red Sea. Ishan Bhanu, senior agricultural commodities analyst at Kpler Data and Analytics, revealed, «Our calculations indicate that 12 more ships were diverted away from the Red Sea this week, carrying about 700,000 metric tons of grain.» He further noted, «Between 4.5 and 4.6 million tons of grain have avoided the Red Sea since December 2023. We have also seen more wheat shipped from France and the Black Sea to Asia away from the Red Sea.»





## 2- Persistent Decline of Yemeni Currency

On February 5, the Yemeni riyal plummeted to its lowest level against foreign currencies in Aden and government-held areas, nearing the 1,600 riyals per US dollar mark. Concerns abound over further depreciation of the local currency amidst Yemen's dire circumstances, exacerbated by escalating waterways crises. The Houthis' targeting of commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Bab El-Mandab, and the Gulf of Aden, alongside rising insurance and shipping costs in international markets, exacerbates the situation.



Economists and bankers have highlighted a stifling foreign exchange liquidity crisis gripping Yemen's local markets. Speculation on foreign currencies has become widespread, driven by merchants' urgent need for imports ahead of the approaching month of Ramadan. Additionally, Yemen's markets react to shifts in international markets, particularly the recent uptick in oil prices.

On February 11, the Yemeni riyal experienced its most significant decline against foreign currencies in about two years in Aden's government-controlled areas. This decline occurred despite the Central Bank's announcement of the imminent receipt of the second tranche of a Saudi grant. The downturn coincides with the appointment of Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak as Prime Minister, who pledged to alleviate the suffering of millions of Yemenis. Banking sources in Aden confirmed to Anadolu Agency that the Yemeni riyal plummeted to 1,628 riyals per dollar in Sunday's trading, marking the local currency's lowest point in over two years. In a related development, Ahmed bin Ahmed Ghaleb Al-Maabqi, the Governor of the Central Bank of Yemen, informed Reuters on February 11 that the second tranche of a one-year Saudi grant, amounting to \$250 million, is set to enter Yemen's budget imminently to support salary payments.

## 3- Economic Boycott's Adverse Impact

Reports on February 11 highlighted the plight of numerous stores and commercial sectors in Yemen's capital, Sana'a, and across the country grappling with the fallout of goods ordered under boycotts, with distribution proving challenging to offset part of their costs. Boycott campaigns targeting products from nations supporting the occupation, amid Israeli strikes on Yemeni areas to prevent Houthi attacks on ships bound for Israel and other destinations, have plunged these goods into a state of widespread stagnation. Despite slashing prices by about half, attempts to entice consumers have faltered amid dwindling purchasing power, potentially dampening demand despite reduced costs.





#### 4- Yemeni Government's Urgent Economic Measures

In February, the Yemeni government enacted significant economic measures in response to the prevailing challenges. On February 12, it mandated an increase in the minimum capital for small finance banks licensed to operate in the country to 15 billion Yemeni riyals, aiming to bolster this critical sector in line with government monetary and financial institutions' legal prerogatives. The Central Bank of Yemen in Aden issued a directive urging concerned banks to meet the new capital requirements within two years, starting in 2024. Microfinance banks must fulfil 50% of the increase within a year and the remainder by December 31, 2025, before receiving final licensing approval.

Furthermore, the government initiated efforts to curtail financial resource leakage from the Central Bank, encompassing customs and tax duties, fuel purchases, electricity and water consumption fees, and telecommunications sector revenues. As confirmed by multiple government sources, such leakage has reportedly cost the public treasury billions of Yemeni riyals.

In its second meeting after Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak was appointed Prime Minister, held on February 24, the government endorsed a series of measures to rectify imbalances in land and sea ports and address existing violations. These measures were based on the Ministerial Committee on Port Imbalances findings, chaired by the defence minister.

In line with the reports' recommendations, the Yemeni government has instructed several key ministries and agencies, including Defence, Finance, Agriculture, Fisheries, Interior, Industry, Commerce, Transport, Water and Environment, as well as heads of Political Security and National Security (Intelligence) agencies, and other relevant government bodies with representatives at land and sea ports, to undertake an immediate job rotation for all leaders and employees at these ports and affiliated entities. The directive aims to address the working conditions of port staff, including local leaders, contractors, and assistants, and to develop suitable solutions.



In a related development reported on February 26, poultry markets in Sanaa and other Yemeni cities have become focal points for intensified regulatory efforts amid worsening food and livelihood crises. Authorities have implemented stringent measures to regulate trading activities in these markets, requiring poultry merchants to adhere to new trading mechanisms, including selling poultry by weight and penalising violators. Oversight is conducted by committees under local authorities. Officials from the Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, Industry, and Trade in Sana'a assert that these measures, initiated in the latter half of the previous year, aim to protect the interests of small producers, consumers, poultry farm owners, and marketers. These efforts follow a controversial decision to temporarily ban the import of frozen poultry from abroad for six months, triggering debate within markets and commercial circles. Merchants and sellers voice concerns over imposed taxes, noting declining sales amid rising production costs and diminished consumer purchasing power amidst worsening food, living, and economic crises.



## 5- Escalation in Red Sea Impacts Fishing Activities

The escalation unfolding in the Red Sea has cast its shadow over specific sectors in Yemen, notably the fishing industry. On February 20, Ghazi Lahmar, Undersecretary of the Yemeni Ministry of Fisheries for Fish Production and Marketing in Aden, lamented the worsening conditions of fishing activities and the broader fish sector in Yemen. Lahmar highlighted the added burdens on fishermen, who already contend with diminished fishing activities compounded by the lingering effects of the country's nine-year civil war. Speaking to Reuters, Lahmar underscored the significant damage inflicted on the fish sector, with infrastructure nearly obliterated by the conflict. The situation has been exacerbated by heightened tensions in the Red Sea, heightening fears for the safety of fishermen and exposing them to increased peril.



## Prominent trends in International interactions towards Yemen in February 2024 can be observed as follows:

### 1 Intensive external tours by the UN envoy to Yemen

In February, the UN envoy to Yemen, Hans Grundberg, embarked on a series of intensive diplomatic tours to facilitate dialogue and understanding among key stakeholders in the Yemeni conflict and advance the peace process.

Grundberg's diplomatic engagements included a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian on February 3, during which they discussed regional developments with a particular emphasis on the Yemeni crisis. Abdollahian highlighted concerns over American and British military actions in Yemen, as well as the reclassification of the Houthis as a terrorist organisation by the United States, citing these factors as complicating the path to a political solution in Yemen.



**Hans Grundberg**

In Riyadh on February 7, Grundberg held discussions to support efforts towards a comprehensive ceasefire and the revival of political negotiations under UN auspices. Meetings with senior Saudi officials and diplomats, including Saudi Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed Al Jaber, underscored the importance of de-escalation regionally and within Yemen.

Continuing his diplomatic efforts, Grundberg met with Emirati officials, including Anwar Gargash and Khalifa Al Marar, in Abu Dhabi on February 8. The discussions emphasised the regional role in fostering a conducive environment for constructive dialogue in Yemen, with Gargash reaffirming the UAE's commitment to international endeavours to resolve the Yemeni crisis.

Grundberg also engaged with Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, Vice Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, to explore avenues to ease tensions within Yemen and advance the political process under UN sponsorship.

Addressing the UN Security Council on February 14, Grundberg highlighted how regional tensions and escalations, particularly related to the conflict in Gaza and its impact on the Red Sea, have impeded progress in Yemen's peace efforts. He emphasised the interconnectedness of regional dynamics with the Yemeni conflict. He expressed concern over repeated Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea, as well as the reactions and repercussions of US and British policies.

Grundberg's diplomatic endeavours underscored the intricacies of achieving peace in Yemen amidst broader regional challenges, emphasising the necessity of addressing the conflict's local and international dimensions.



## Iran Condemns US-British Operations in Yemen

2

Iran issued a strong condemnation of the recent airstrikes conducted by the United States and Britain on various cities and regions in Yemen, denouncing them as violations of Yemen's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international law. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani labelled these airstrikes as «a clear adventure and a worrying threat to international peace and security,» emphasising that they represent a continuation of the misguided military policies pursued by Washington and London in the region. Kanaani stressed that these actions contradict the repeated claims made by the US and UK regarding their reluctance to escalate conflicts in the area.



**Reza Talaei Nik**

Brigadier General Reza Talaei Nik, spokesman for the Iranian Ministry of Defense, further rejected Western and American allegations of supplying Iranian weapons to the Houthi rebels, asserting that the Houthis possess indigenous and self-sufficient military capabilities. Talaei Nik highlighted the significant military advancements made by countries aligned with the resistance axis, insisting that accusations against Iran are aimed at imposing financial penalties and undermining Yemen's efforts to thwart support shipments to Israel. He underscored that resolving the crisis in the Red Sea requires a ceasefire in Gaza.

Iran's response reflects a dual strategy of solidarity with the Houthi group through denunciation of US-British operations while simultaneously distancing itself from the group and refuting allegations of support. This approach aims to afford the Houthis greater manoeuvrability while avoiding pressure on Iran while also leveraging Houthi activities to exert pressure on Western countries.



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Disagreements Within US Administration Over Handling of Houthis

Amid mounting concerns over Houthi attacks on ships, internal debates are underway within US President Joe Biden's administration regarding the most effective approach to curb such assaults, according to American CNN network reports on February 23.

Some officials within the administration argue that relying solely on the use of force is ineffective, citing the high costs and practical challenges of launching expensive missiles at relatively inexpensive Houthi drones and missiles. Former officials outside the administration advocate for a more targeted strategy, emphasising the necessity of focusing on the group's leadership rather than their weapons stockpiles, drawing parallels with previous successful measures against Iranian-backed Iraqi militias.



**Sabrina Singh**

Deputy Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh acknowledged the Houthi's significant arsenal, highlighting their capability and access to advanced weaponry, believed to be sourced from Iran, following another Houthi missile attack on a cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden.

In a related development on February 28, bipartisan members of the US Senate questioned President Biden's strategy in addressing Houthi attacks on commercial ships, insisting on obtaining authorisation for continued military action against the Yemen-based group. Democrat Senator Tim Kaine expressed serious concerns during a congressional hearing regarding the legal basis and ramifications of the strikes.

As part of efforts to counter the Houthi threat, both the United States and Britain announced on February 27 the imposition of new sanctions on entities and individuals implicated in facilitating Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Arabian Sea. Notable figures these sanctions target include Ali Hussein Badr Al-Din Al-Houthi, Muhammad Reza Falahzadeh, and Saad Al-Jamal, alongside Unit 190 and Unit 6000 of the Quds Force.






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 [info@ygcs.center](mailto:info@ygcs.center)