



# Spotlight on Iran

July 10 – 17, 2024

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## Highlights<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian, speaking with Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, stressed that his government would place the Palestinian issue at the top of his list of priorities and would work to stop the war in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani visited several countries in the region and met with commanders and senior members of the “resistance front” to emphasize Iran’s continued support for the pro-Iranian axis; IRGC commander Hossein Salami said Iran would support the “resistance front” and fight if circumstances demanded it.
- ▶ Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri visited New York to participate in a Security Council meeting on developments in the Gaza Strip. He warned that if Israel tried to expand the war to other arenas, it would cause itself further damage and benefit the “resistance.”
- ▶ The Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed joint responsibility for launching drones at a ship in the Mediterranean. In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for three attacks of its own against targets in Israel. There has been no confirmation of the claims from other sources.
- ▶ The Houthis reported attacks against civilian vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The US Central Command confirmed two of the attacks, one of them against an Israeli-owned ship. There were no casualties, but damage was caused. In addition, the Houthis claimed responsibility for launching drones at Eilat. There has been no verification of the claim from other sources.

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<sup>1</sup> The weekly study includes the activities of Iran, the Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen.

- ▶ American intelligence published a report showing that the weapons seized on their way to the Houthis were made in Iran. Iran's mission to the UN dismissed these claims.
- ▶ The Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthis intensified their threats to act against Saudi Arabia, accusing it of helping Israel.

## Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

- ▶ Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian, sending a letter to Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, stressed Iran's continued support for the Palestinians.<sup>2</sup> In a letter of response to the congratulations sent by Haniyeh to Pezeshkian following his election victory, the president-elect wrote that the Islamic Republic was committed to the principle of support for the Palestinian people and its struggle against the "occupation and apartheid of the Zionist regime" and considered it its human and Islamic duty. He added that Iran would continue to fully support the Palestinian people until all its rights were realized and Jerusalem was liberated and that he was certain that the fighters of the Palestinian "resistance" would win the current war (ISNA, July 10, 2024).
- ▶ On July 14, 2024, Pezeshkian spoke by phone with Haniyeh and discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, including the IDF attack on the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammad Deif, in Khan Yunis on July 13, 2024. Pezeshkian condemned the attack, saying that "this crime is a sign of the Zionist regime's desire to continue the genocide of the Palestinian people and break the will of the resistance." He stressed that Iran would never leave the Palestinian people alone under these dire conditions and that his government would place the Palestinian issue at the top of its list of priorities. He added that Iran would devote all its efforts to stopping the war and the "genocide." Haniyeh, for his part, thanked the president-elect for Iran's support for the Palestinians and asked him to continue his political and diplomatic efforts to "stop Israel's acts of aggression" (Mehr, July 14, 2024).

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<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the ITIC's study from July 15, 2024, "[Considerable effort by Iran to emphasize its continued support for the 'resistance front' following the election of President Pezeshkian](#)"



**Pezeshkian and Haniyeh (Mehr, July 14, 2024)**

- ▶ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned the Israeli attack on Khan Yunis on July 13, 2024. He noted that humanitarian behavior cannot be expected from an “illegitimate regime” based on crime, but what was unfortunate was the silence and inaction on the part of Western governments in the face of “these crimes and cruelty.” He added that the United States and several European governments that supported Israel were the biggest losers in the war against the Gaza Strip, saying that they lost not only the war but also morality and human dignity (Nasser Kanani’s X account, July 14, 2024).
- ▶ In an article published by Iran’s president-elect, Masoud Pezeshkian referred to Israel, noting that it remains an “apartheid regime” and is now adding “genocide” to a record of occupation, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, settlement building, possession of nuclear weapons, illegal annexation, and aggression against its neighbors. Pezeshkian noted that as a first step, his government would urge its Arab neighbors to cooperate and use all political and diplomatic leverage to prioritize achieving a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to stop the “massacre” and prevent the crisis from spreading. According to him, after that, action must be taken to end the prolonged occupation, which he claims has destroyed four generations of Palestinians (Tehran Times, July 13, 2024).
- ▶ Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani met with commanders and senior members of the “resistance front” during a recent visit to the “resistance front areas” (apparently referring to Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq). During his visit, whose exact date and location were not disclosed by the Iranian media, Qaani stressed that Iran would continue to support them, noting that supporting the “resistance,” especially “Palestine” and the residents of the Gaza Strip, was a strategic policy, fixed and agreed upon by all parts of the regime and people of Iran (ISNA, July 11, 2024).

► Mohammad Ali Sobhani, Iran's former ambassador to Lebanon, said that strengthening the "axis of resistance" was a permanent position of the Islamic Republic, although the approach of President Pezeshkian's government toward the resistance differed from that of the hardline conservatives. He said there was no basis for claims by some of Pezeshkian's opponents that his election would harm relations between Iran and the "axis of resistance." According to Sobhani, at the farewell meeting between Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah and former reformist President Mohammad Khatami, Nasrallah noted that Khatami's government's support for Hezbollah far exceeded expectations. Sobhani added that support for the "resistance" would be part of the president-elect's foreign policy, but that support would be expressed not only in terms of military capabilities but also in the political sphere in the region and beyond, in a way that would enable the "resistance" groups to improve their political standing and strengthen their ties with Arab countries at Israel's expense. According to him, by adopting a prudent foreign policy, the Pezeshkian government can isolate Israel and prevent it from driving a wedge between Iran and its Arab neighbors. In addition, he anticipated that the new government could introduce political initiatives aimed at achieving a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Jamaran, July 11, 2024).

► Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri, who is visiting New York to participate in a Security Council meeting on developments in the Gaza Strip, met with Dennis Francis, the president of the UN General Assembly, to discuss developments in the region, especially in the Gaza Strip. He thanked the General Assembly president for its decisions regarding support for the Palestinians and an end to the war in the Gaza Strip and called for increased efforts to "stop the attacks against the residents of the Gaza Strip and the crimes of the Zionist regime" (Mehr, July 16, 2024).

► Bagheri said in an interview that Israel was losing the war against the coalition of Iran's allies. He warned that if Israel tried to expand the war to other arenas, including Lebanon, it would fail to change this new order, cause itself further damage, and bring additional benefit to the "resistance." He said Iran would not stand idly by in the face of threats from Israel (Newsweek, July 16, 2024).

► IRGC commander Hossein Salami said at a memorial ceremony for the fallen soldiers of Ramazan Headquarters (the IRGC headquarters that operated in Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War) that Iran would not stand idly by but would support the "resistance front" and fight if circumstances demanded it. He noted that the location of Iran's operation was determined

based on its ideological geography and that it would intervene wherever Muslims were in danger. He stressed that Muslims were precious and invincible. Salami added that the “resistance front” had spread and that the Zionists were under fire from Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, “Palestine,” and Iran itself (Tasnim, July 10, 2024).



The IRGC commander (Tasnim, July 10, 2024)

## Iranian involvement in Syria and Lebanon

►“Intelligence sources” in the region reported that the powers of the IRGC commander in Syria and Lebanon, Mohammad Reza Zahedi (Hassan Mahdavi), who was killed in an attack in Damascus attributed to Israel on April 1, 2024, were split among several replacements. According to the report, this may indicate difficulty in finding a single replacement for the senior Iranian official who was assassinated, as well as precautionary measures on the part of the Revolutionary Guards ahead of the possibility of similar targeted killings in the future (Israeli TV channel Kan 11, July 14, 2024).

## Iranian involvement in Iraq

►On July 10, 2024, Iran’s president-elect Masoud Pezeshkian spoke with the president of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, who congratulated him on his election victory. Pezeshkian thanked Barzani and stressed the need to strengthen Iran’s ties with Iraq and the Kurdish region (Tasnim, July 10, 2024).

►On July 14, 2024, Pezeshkian spoke with Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, who congratulated him on his election victory and thanked Iran for its support of the Palestinian people. The president-elect praised the Houthi leadership’s decision to support the Palestinian people in the current dire circumstances, noting that several Muslim countries were acting in accordance with their interests and limiting themselves to

declarations. He added that the free nations would prosecute rulers who did not act to stop “the crimes of the Zionist regime against the Palestinian people.” Also, Pezeshkian expressed his hope for the lifting of the siege on Yemen (al-Alam, July 15, 2024).



Pezeshkian and al-Mashat (al-Alam, July 15, 2024)

## Activities of the Shiite militias

### Joint attack by Iraqi militias and the Houthis

► On July 15, 2024, the Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a joint attack against the ship Olvia in the Mediterranean Sea (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, July 15, 2024; Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 16, 2024). The Islamic Resistance in Iraq published alleged documentation of the launch of UAVs as part of the joint attack (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 16, 2024). The claim has not been verified from other sources.



Launch of one of the UAVs in the joint attack  
(Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 16, 2024)

► According to a “military expert” close to the Yemeni Defense Ministry, there has been high-level coordination between the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq for months, with the

sides maintaining daily contact. He added that a Houthi special coordination office had been operating in Iraq “for some time,” indicating that the Houthis want the United States and Saudi Arabia to know that the movement is about to carry out “deep and large-scale operations at the regional level, not only against Israel but also against its defenders in the region, first and foremost the American bases.” He said that “the message is also directed at Saudi Arabia” and that “any future operation will come from more than one direction and one side” (al-Akhbar, July 13, 2025).

## Iraq

### Claims of responsibility of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq

► This week, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for three independent attacks against targets in Israel. The claims have not been verified by other sources (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 10-16, 2024):

- ◆ July 9, 2024: Ashdod Port using UAVs (the announcement was made on July 10, 2024).
- ◆ July 15, 2024: Eilat and Haifa Port using UAVs and an al-Arqab cruise missile.
- ◆ July 16, 2024: Military base (“Ma’alim”) using UAVs.



**Right: One of the UAVs being launched at Eilat and Haifa Port; left: The cruise missile being launched (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 15, 2024)**

► A “special source” noted that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq decided to escalate its military operations in response to the “massacre carried out by Israel” in al-Mawasi in Khan Yunis, during the attempted killing of the head of Hamas’ military wing, Mohammad Deif. Kata’ib Hezbollah noted that after the “massacre” in Khan Yunis, Israel “does not understand anything except the language of weapons, which requires increasing the pace of operations of the axis of resistance against this entity.” Kata’ib Hezbollah added that the United States “participates

in the killing of Palestinians by supporting the Zionists and supplying thousands of tons of bombs” (al-Mayadeen, July 15, 2024).

## **The militias’ preparations for escalation in Lebanon**

►Iran is reportedly working to strengthen its positions in southern Syria. According to reports, additional reinforcements have arrived, including fighters from Iraqi militias loyal to Iran, in preparation for any developments that may occur from the Golan Heights, especially if the ceasefire negotiations in the Gaza Strip fail (al-Modon, July 14, 2024).

## **Pro-Iranian militias’ support for the Palestinians**

►The pro-Iranian militias took advantage of the Ashura events<sup>3</sup> to express their support for the Palestinians. The following are prominent statements:

◆ Kata'ib Hezbollah issued a statement calling on Muslims to defend the oppressed and adopt tough positions against the countries that support the “Zionist killing machine.” According to the statement, this year’s Ashura events come under circumstances “quite similar” to those experienced by Imam al-Hussein bin Ali in terms of “damage to the holy sites, lack of support against the arrogant, in addition to the massacres carried out by the Zionists against Muslims, with the help of America and NATO, the failure of Arab leaders, and the silence and cowardice of foreigners who claim to be humanitarians” (Kata'ib Hezbollah website, July 17, 2024).

◆ Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq militia, said that the Gaza Strip had revived the position of supporters of Imam al-Hussein bin Ali, which opposes all cruelty and all evil of “the Zionist-Israeli enemy and of those who stand by it among the arrogant countries and among the traitorous and unscrupulous normalization regimes.” He stressed the militia’s support for the “resistance” and its opposition to “occupation and normalization” (Qais al-Khazali’s X account, July 16, 2024).

## **Attack on an American base**

►On the night of July 16, 2024, explosions were reported in two locations in the US military wing at the US-led International Coalition base of Ayn al-Assad in Iraq (al-Mayadeen, July 16, 2024). At the same time, it was reported that the International Coalition forces had shot down one of the two UAVs that attacked the base (al-Hadath, July 16, 2024). No one has claimed

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<sup>3</sup> Ashura: The tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar. Shiites observe this day as a period of mourning for the death of Imam Hussein bin Ali and many other members of the family of Ali bin Abi Talib at the Battle of Karbala in 61 Hijra (680 CE).



responsibility for the attack, and the US Department of Defense has not yet confirmed the incident. The report on the incident came amid statements by “sources” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq that the militias were examining the resumption of operations against American bases in view of the delay in implementing the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq (al-Akhbar, July 15, 2024).

## Yemen

### Anti-vessel attacks

►Over the past week, the Houthis have continued to claim responsibility for carrying out attacks against civilian vessels. Houthi Armed Forces spokesman Yahya Saria reported on the attacks (Yahya Saria’s X account, July 12-16, 2024):

- ◆ July 12, 2024: Targeting the ship Chrysalis twice, in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait, with ballistic missiles, anti-ship missiles, and drones. The claim has not been verified by other sources.
- ◆ July 14, 2024: Attack on the Israeli ship MSC UNIFIC in the Gulf of Aden using ballistic missiles and drones. The claim has not been verified.
- ◆ July 15, 2024: Attack on the ship Bentley I in the Red Sea using UAVs, unmanned surface vehicles (USVs), and ballistic missiles; Attack on the CHIOS Lion tanker in the Red Sea using a USV. It was claimed that the hit was precise and direct. The Houthis also released alleged documentation of the tanker being hit. Saria said the attacks had been carried out in response to "the massacre in al-Mawasi in Khan Yunis" (an attack carried out by Israel against the head of Hamas' military wing, Mohammad Deif). The US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that the Houthis had attacked the MT Bentley I in the Red Sea with a USV and two small, manned boats, and then also using an anti-vessel ballistic missile. The ship, which according to CENTCOM is owned by Israel, transported shipments of vegetable oil from Russia to China. No casualties or damage were reported. In addition, CENTCOM confirmed that the Houthis had attacked the MT Chios Lion tanker in the Red Sea using a USV. Damage was caused, but there were no casualties, and the tanker crew did not ask for assistance (CENTCOM X account, July 16, 2024).



**The alleged documentation of the attack on the oil tanker Chios Lion using a USV  
(the Houthis' military media wing X account, July 16, 2024)**

- ▶ On July 14, 2024, a Greek naval frigate belonging to the European Union Red Sea Task Force foiled an attempted attack by a Houthi swarm of drones against a merchant ship that it escorted. The frigate intercepted one of the drones, and the others changed course and left the area. No damage or casualties were reported (EU Task Force EUNAVFOR Aspides X account, July 14, 2024).
- ▶ CENTCOM reported during the week that its forces had intercepted 11 Houthi drones over the Red Sea and eight USVs in the Red Sea. In addition, a USV and five UAVs were destroyed in Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen (CENTCOM X account, July 10-17, 2024).
- ▶ On July 12, 2024, CENTCOM announced that the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group (TRCSG) had arrived in the Fifth Fleet's operational area as part of its operations against the Houthis. This follows the recent departure of the Eisenhower aircraft carrier, which had been in the region for more than seven months. The mission is reportedly to “deter aggression, promote regional stability, and protect the free flow of commerce in the region” (CENTCOM X account, July 12, 2024).

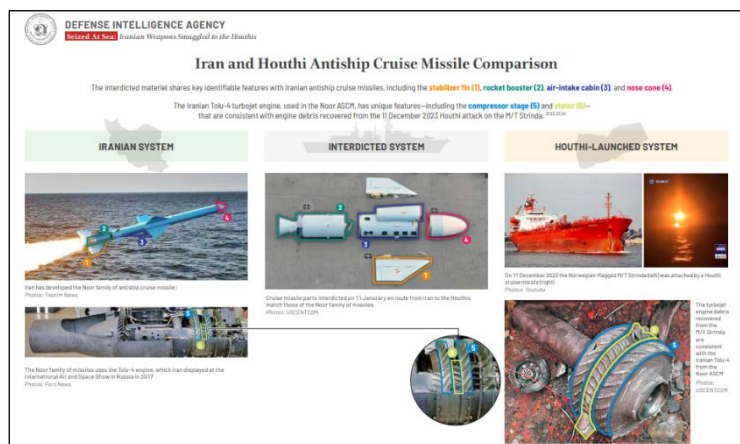
## Launching UAVs at Israel

- ▶ On July 14, 2024, the Houthis claimed responsibility for attacking “military targets” in the Eilat area with several drones. It was claimed that the operation “achieved its goals” (Yahya Saria's X account, July 14, 2024). The claim has not been verified.

## Houthi armament efforts

- ▶ A report by the US Department of Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) provided visual documentation proving that the weapons en route to the Houthis seized at sea on January 11 and 28, 2024, were made in Iran. In addition, a comparison was made between missile photographs presented by the Iranians and remains collected after Houthi attacks, which

showed that the source was Iranian. The report notes that between 2015 and 2024, the US and its allies seized at least 20 vessels smuggling weapons to the Houthis, including the confiscation of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank guided missiles, drones, and other weapons. The agency estimates that the Houthis have used weapons supplied by Iran for more than 100 attacks against land targets in Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen, and dozens of attacks against vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (US Department of Defense intelligence Agency website, July 10, 2024).



**Comparison of components of Houthi and Iranian anti-ship cruise missiles (US Department of Defense Intelligence Agency, July 10, 2024)**

►Iran’s ambassador to the UN in New York, Amir Saeed Iravani, dismissed American claims of cooperation between Iran and the Houthis in Yemen. In a letter to the Security Council, Iravani wrote that there was no basis for these claims, which he asserted were intended to justify American “aggression” against Yemen’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. According to him, Iran supports a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Yemen and is committed to Security Council resolutions regarding Yemen and to the freedom of navigation (ISNA, July 12, 2024). The Iranian mission to the UN also denied the American intelligence report that Iran had supplied weapons to the Houthis, claiming that they had developed their own independent military capabilities (AP, July 12, 2024). In this context, the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC) published studies showing the direct connection between Iran and the Houthis, including the transfer of weapons.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For further information, see the ITIC’s studies from February 4, 2024, “[Houthi military-terrorist escalation and the deterioration of the situation in the Red Sea](#),” From November 3, 2023, “[The Houthis and Operation Iron Swords](#),” From March 14, 2023, “[The Houthi Movement and the War in Yemen: Development and Significance](#)”

► On July 15, 2024, it was reported that an Iranian ship en route to Houthi-controlled territory carrying a cargo of “foreign experts” and military equipment for manufacturing missiles disappeared in the Red Sea after leaving a port in the Horn of Africa region. The report also stated that the Houthis had sent search teams to locate the ship but without success. The Houthis are reportedly concerned that the ship was intercepted and seized by US-led coalition forces or European forces operating in the Red Sea, which have recently stepped up their efforts to thwart Iranian smuggling into Houthi territory (Iran International, July 15, 2024).

### **Statements by senior Houthi officials**

► Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi accused Israel of attacking the displaced people in areas that were supposed to be safe. He said the “support fronts” in the Palestinian struggle in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq had imposed a new equation in the war against the “enemy” and that they would continue to support the Palestinians until the war was won. He added that the “support fronts” were in full coordination with the Palestinians and aimed at escalation (al-Masirah, July 11, 2024).

► On July 13, 2024, following the Israeli attack in Khan Yunis against the head of Hamas’ military wing, Mohammad Deif, Yahya Saria said that the Houthi forces were monitoring developments in the Gaza Strip. He accused that the failure of Arab and Muslim countries had encouraged Israel to “continue committing crimes in front of the world.” Saria stressed that the Houthi forces would continue to support the Palestinians until “the aggression and siege end” and threatened that they would “not hesitate to expand military operations” against Israel and those who support it (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, July 13, 2024).

### **Houthi cyber threat**

► An investigation by a cybersecurity company revealed surveillanceware called GuardZoo used by the Houthis against the mobile devices of military personnel across the Middle East. According to the investigation, the cyber operation began in October 2019 and continued into 2024, and so far, more than 450 IP addresses of victims have been identified in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey, with the spyware being used to collect information such as photos, documents, and location files (Lookout, July 9, 2024)

## Threats against Saudi Arabia by the Iraqi militias

► In the near future, the Iraqi militias reportedly intend to expand their cooperation with the Houthis to pressure Saudi Arabia to end its support for Israel. It was claimed that the recent statements by the Houthis and Kata'ib Hezbollah threatening Saudi Arabia were the result of coordination between the sides and that the Houthis asked the militias to threaten Saudi Arabia to exert pressure on it from both directions (@OALD24 X account, July 14, 2024).

► Senior figures in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthi movement in Yemen intensified their threats against Saudi Arabia and threatened to attack it, claiming that it was helping Israel. The following are prominent statements:

- ◆ Firas al-Yasser, a member of the Nujaba's political bureau, said the Iraqi "resistance" had recently focused on Saudi Arabia, and that during the al-Aqsa Flood, "sufficient and comprehensive" information had been discovered about the extent of the support it had given Israel, despite the siege imposed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthi forces in Yemen (al-Akhbar, July 15, 2024).

- ◆ Kata'ib Hezbollah accused the "countries of normalization" with Israel, and the "malicious role" of Saudi leaders in particular, of "exploiting their land routes to continue the campaign against the Palestinians, as an alternative to the sea routes." The militia added that "the evil kingdom will pay the price for its actions" (al-Maalomah, July 13, 2024).

- ◆ Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi warned Saudi Arabia against interfering in "the Houthis' direct war against Israel, the United States, and Britain" and threatened that "you have a lot [of assets], and a lot can be attacked causing tremendous damage." He added that Saudi Arabia was taking economic measures against Yemen "as a result of American pressure," and that they were intended to serve Israel in an attempt to force the Houthis to withdraw their support for the Gaza Strip (al-Masirah, July 11, 2024).

- ◆ Military spokesman Yahya Saria accused the Saudi regime of "implementing American directives and serving the Israeli enemy." He warned that the Houthi forces were in military readiness to "implement the demands of our people for a legitimate response" (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, July 12, 2024).

- ◆ Houthi political council member Mohammad Ali al-Houthi said that "all options are still on the agenda and the Houthi forces are fully ready." He called on the Saudis to "think carefully about their hostile measures towards us, since we will not hesitate to act

legitimately against such aggression” (Mohammad Ali al-Houthi’s X account, July 13, 2024).

◆ Senior Houthi official Yasser al-Khoury said that “everyone will understand that any direct or indirect action directed at Saudi Arabia will be considered a continuation of the defense of Palestine” (al-Mayadeen Telegram channel, July 13, 2024).