



Houthi-Israel-United States Escalation, December 2024

December 25, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ Since the beginning of December 2024, Yahya Saria, the Houthi military spokesperson, claimed responsibility for 21 UAV and ballistic missile attacks on Israel, six of which were carried out in cooperation with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. It was the highest monthly number of attacks since the beginning of the Gaza Strip War. Some of the missiles and UAVs caused significant damage in Israel.
- ▶ On December 19, 2024, in response to the increase in attacks, the Israeli Air Force conducted a third strike on Houthi targets in Yemen, targeting areas in Sanaa, the capital, for the first time. Among the targets attacked were power stations and fuel and oil tanks, with reports of nine fatalities.
- ▶ The Houthis also escalated attacks on American military and civilian vessels in the Red Sea while decreasing attacks against non-American vessels. The United States carried out airstrikes against command and control facilities and underground missile storage sites.
- ▶ The Houthi leader and senior officials announced that despite Israeli and American strikes, they would continue attacking Israel as part of their "support for the Palestinians," and would not stop until the war in the Gaza Strip ended.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, the Houthis plan to intensify their attacks on Israel, including by introducing new weapons, to position themselves as the leading active front of the "resistance axis"² in light of the ceasefire in Lebanon and the halt of attacks by pro-Iranian militias in Iraq. Although the Houthis connect the continuation of their attacks to the war in the Gaza Strip, they will most likely find other pretexts to continue their violent activities in order to maintain their external and internal standing. However, international cooperation led by the United States, combining economic and military**

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

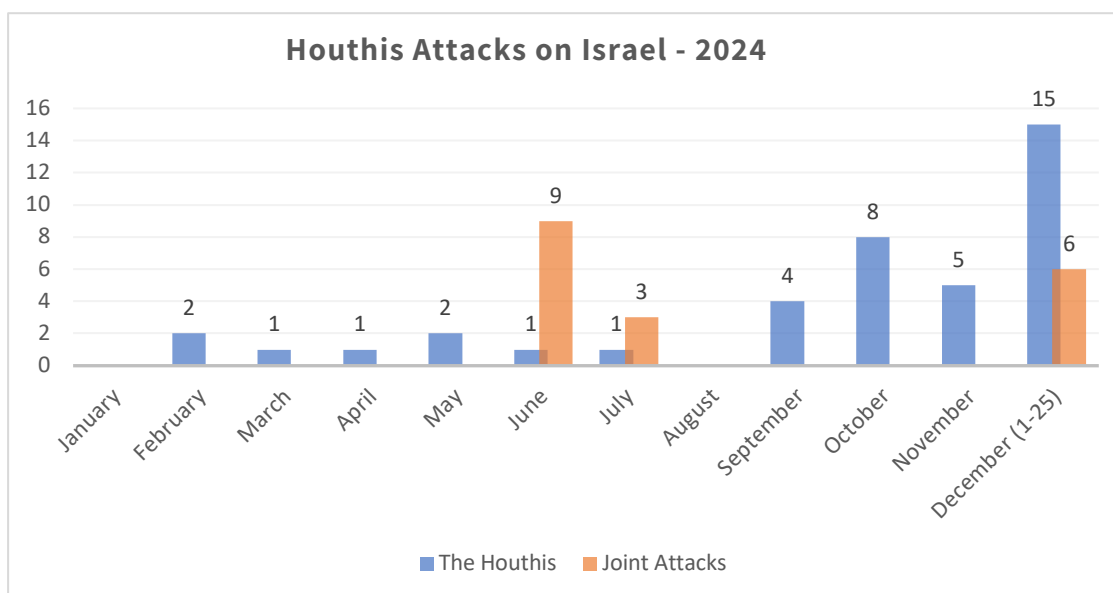
pressure, including targeted strikes on the Houthis' military capabilities, could dampen their ability to maintain their activities over time.

Recent Escalation

Houthi attacks on Israel

▶ Since the beginning of December 2024 Yahya Saria, the spokesperson of the Houthi forces, has claimed responsibility for 21 UAV and ballistic missile attacks on Israel, the highest monthly number of Houthi attacks since the start of the Gaza Strip War on October 7, 2023.^{3,4}

▶ According to Saria, six of the attacks were carried out in cooperation with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, the first joint attacks since July 15, 2024. However, unlike the nine previous attacks in June-July 2024, no corresponding claim of responsibility was issued by the pro-Iranian militias, which reported they had decided to halt their attacks against Israel, fearing retaliation and pressure from the Iraqi government.⁵



Israel attacks Yemen

▶ Before dawn on December 19, 2024, shortly after a ballistic missile launched at central Israel was intercepted, the Israeli Air Force struck Houthi military targets along the coast and deep inside Yemen. Among the targets attacked were power stations and fuel and oil tanks in the Sanaa area, as well as facilities and vessels in the ports of Ras Issa, al-Hudaydah and al-

³ According to IDF data, since the beginning of the war on October 7, 2023, until December 19, 2024, the Houthis have launched more than 200 missiles and 170 UAVs at Israeli territory, most of which were intercepted or did not enter Israeli airspace (Israeli media, December 19, 2024).

⁴ For further information on the attacks, see the Appendix 1.

⁵ For further information, see the August 2024 ITIC report, "[Cooperation between the Shi'ite militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen.](#)"

Salif. According to the IDF spokesperson, the strike targeted facilities used by the Houthis for military and terrorist activities and was carried out in response to repeated attacks on Israel (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 19, 2024).⁶

▶ According to reports, multiple strikes were carried out on the Haziz and Dhahban power stations in the Sanaa area, the al-Hudaydah and al-Salif ports, and the oil facility in Ras Issa, resulting in nine fatalities and various injuries (al-Masirah, December 19, 2024). The Houthi government claimed that thousands of families had been left without electricity and called on Arab and Muslim countries to condemn the "Zionist crime" (Houthi combat information Telegram channel, December 19, 2024).



Right: The targets attacked (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2024). Center and left: Pictures of the attack on the Haziz powerplant (al-Mahriah Telegram channel, December 19-20, 2024)

Houthi confrontation with the United States

▶ The Houthis have also escalated their attacks on American military and civilian vessels in the Red Sea since the beginning of December 2024. They did not claim responsibility for attacks on vessels not flying the American flag.⁷

▶ United States Central Command (CENTCOM) forces also struck Houthi military targets in Yemen in an effort to prevent them from attacking at sea:

- ◆ December 16–17, 2024: A precision airstrike targeted a significant Houthi command and control facility in Sanaa which was used to coordinate Houthi operations, including attacks against American warships and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden (CENTCOM X account, December 17, 2024). The strike targeted the Houthi Ministry of Defense building in the al- Ardi area in central Sanaa (al-Mayadeen, December 17, 2024).

⁶ It was the third Israeli strike on the Houthis since the beginning of the war in Gaza in October 2023. The previous strikes were carried out on July 20, 2024 and September 29, 2024.

⁷ For further information on the attacks, see Appendix 2.

- ◆ December 21, 2024: Precision strikes targeted a missile storage site and a command and control facility in Sanaa using fighter jets and naval assets (CENTCOM X account, December 21, 2024). Yahya Saria claimed that the strikes had been unsuccessful (Yahya Saria's X account, December 21, 2024).
- ◆ A shift in the targets of coalition force strikes on the Houthis has been observed since October 2024. Previous strikes primarily focused on radar systems, command and control facilities, and ground-based attack systems (launchers, missiles, and UAVs) used for attacks on vessels near Yemen's coasts. Since October 2024, the strikes have been directed at above-ground and underground weapon storage sites as well as command and control centers.
- ▶ The change in military response coincided with a decrease in Houthi attacks on commercial vessels. From the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023 to August 2024, an average of more than eight commercial vessels were attacked per month. Since September 2024, only eight such vessels have been attacked.⁸

Houthi Statements

- ▶ On December 19, 2024, Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi delivered his weekly speech, addressing the attacks on Israel and the Israeli strike in Yemen (al-Masirah, December 19, 2024):
 - ◆ He reported that two ballistic missiles were launched at Israel, one immediately after dinner [sic] and the other during the movement of Israeli Air Force planes en route to strike Yemen. He said the second missile was launched at Israel's Ministry of Defense building to send a "strong message," and claimed that the attacks had caused "the enemy enormous confusion" and disrupted the completion of the Israeli strike mission.
 - ◆ He claimed that Houthi attacks over the past week (to December 19) had caused "a massive state of terror, panic and extreme fear among the Jews." He referred to the temporary suspension of flights at Ben Gurion Airport, claiming it informed airlines that the situation was "unsafe" and that they should not resume flights to and from Israel.

⁸ Noam Raydan and Farzin Nadimi, "Tracking Maritime Attacks in the Middle East Since 2019," Washington Institute, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/756ca769315d4b879ca7fdd6bd4a82be>.

- ◆ He said the Houthis were determined to escalate their military activity against Israel and intensify the attacks, based on a "steadfast, principled, religious, moral and humanitarian position" to support the Palestinians.
- ◆ He emphasized that Israeli "aggression" against Yemen would not affect the escalation of the "fifth phase" of the confrontation. He claimed the Houthis would not retreat from their stance of supporting the Palestinian people, regardless of challenges and attacks from the Americans, Israelis "and all those who orbit around them." He stated they were "fully convinced of our position, prepared to confront any level of escalation, and will never be like those who allow their sovereignty to be violated."
- ▶ Other senior Houthi officials also stressed the official position that they were undeterred by Israeli and American strikes and determined to continue their operations against Israel until the war in Gaza ended. They boasted of recent hits within Israel following the failure to intercept some of the missiles:
 - ◆ Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi political bureau, accused the United States and Israel of attacking civilian facilities, calling them "terrorist war crimes deserving condemnation." He added that the strikes would not prevent the Houthis from fulfilling their "duty to support" Gaza, and Yemen's operations against the "terrorists" would continue (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi's X account, December 19, 2024). He also stated that the Houthis were increasing their capabilities, leading to the "continuous failure of American, European and Israeli air defense systems" (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi's X account, December 21, 2024). He claimed they were "not afraid of the Jews" and paid no attention to their threats, and stated that "Yemenis are entirely different from the Arabs who normalize [diplomatic relations with Israel]." Referring to attacks on American warships, he boasted that three aircraft carriers had left the region since the war began and warned that if the current carrier did not leave, they would continue attacking it (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi's Telegram channel, December 24, 2024).
 - ◆ Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, another member of the Houthi political bureau, said that "military actions" in support of Gaza would continue (Mohammed al-Bukhaiti's X account, December 19, 2024). He added that the "Zionist entity," the United States, and the UK had fallen "into the Yemeni trap" and threatened that all American allies would face "painful attacks" if they became involved "in the war of conquest waged against

our people." He claimed that the Houthis had sufficient weapons and air power to destroy the "enemy's" infrastructure and were preparing in all areas of air defense, both militarily and through the recruitment and training of thousands of new fighters (al-Mahriah TV, December 21, 2024).

◆ In another interview, al-Bukhaiti acknowledged that were suffering "painful blows" but emphasized that each time they were attacked, they emerged stronger. He said, "We are ready to pay the price for our support for Gaza and are not afraid of assassinations." Referring to the American strike in Yemen, he claimed that the "Zionist entity" could not confront the Houthis alone and thus sought assistance (al-Jazeera, December 22, 2024).

◆ Hussein al-Ezzi, also a member of the Houthi political bureau, stated that following the Israeli strike, he expected an increase in attacks from Yemen. He said repeated strikes would gradually lead to a prolonged war, and Sanaa was "skilled in this type of war, no matter how intense." He claimed that no "settler" would want to live on land where life alternated between the streets and shelters and stressed that it would be easier to stop the "genocide" in Gaza than to threaten Yemen (Hussein al-Ezzi's X account, December 20, 2024).

◆ Hazam al-Asad, another political bureau member, published several statements in Hebrew referring to recent events (Hazam al-Asad's X account, December 19–24, 2024). He claimed, "Tel Aviv will not be safe as long as the siege and attacks on our people in Gaza continue;" "Tel Aviv – 'Gush Dan' Greater Jaffa [illustrated];" "There is no longer any use for interception systems costing billions of dollars;" "The failure of all Israeli defense systems means that the depths of the Zionist enemy are no longer safe;" "The intercepting missiles failed, as always, causing random destruction that doubled the enemy's losses. Our military actions are legitimate and aimed at stopping aggression against our children in Gaza;" "A question for the residents of the Gush Dan area and western Jerusalem: What did you hear first, the siren or the rocket explosion?" and "There will be a new Middle East, healthy and clean from the cancerous tumor 'Israel'."

▶ The Houthi attacks on Israel have been highlighted in massive marches in support of Palestinians held in Sanaa and other Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen every Friday. They march organizers praised the Houthi leader, the military forces, and the Arab nation for "the

great victories and successful operations" that struck "deep into the enemy entity" (al-Masirah, December 20, 2024).



Right: The front page of the daily al-Masirah, with the headline, "Ready and prepared...not to surrender to aggression." Left: The paper's daily cartoon (al-Masirah, December 20, 2024).

Appendix 1: Houthi Attacks on Israel, December 2024

► Houthi attacks on Israel since the beginning of December 2024, based on statements by the Houthi forces' spokesperson, Yahya Saria (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, December 1–25, 2024):

- ◆ **December 1, 2024:** Attack on a "vital target" in the area of the city of "Jaffa" [Tel Aviv] using a Palestine 2 hypersonic ballistic missile.⁹ He claimed the attack had achieved its objective; the IDF spokesperson stated that a missile launched at central Israel was intercepted before entering Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 1, 2024).
- ◆ **December 3, 2024:** Three joint attacks within 48 hours carried out with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq on targets in Israel using UAV swarms. According to Saria, two attacks targeted northern Israel, and the third targeted a "vital target" in Eilat. He claimed all attacks had been successful. Unlike previous attacks, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq did not issue a corresponding statement; the IDF spokesperson reported the interception of two UAVs, one in the Mediterranean Sea on November 30, 2024, and another in the Red Sea on December 2, 2024. In all instances, the UAVs did not enter Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, November 30–December 2, 2024).

⁹ For further information on the Palestine 2 missile and the "Jaffa" UAV launched by the Houthis at Israel, see the July 2024 ITIC report, "[Escalation in the Conflict Between Israel and the Houthis – Background and Implication](#);" and the September 2024 report: "[Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis \(September 11–18, 2024\)](#)."

- ◆ **December 8, 2024:** A joint attack with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq on a "vital target" in southern Israel using UAVs, which Saria claimed had been successful. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq did not issue a corresponding statement; the IDF spokesperson reported that the Israeli Air Force had intercepted a missile launched from Yemen before it entered Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 8, 2024).
- ◆ **December 9, 2024:** Attack on a "sensitive target south of Jaffa" using a UAV. Saria claimed the attack had achieved its objective; the UAV struck the upper floors of a 15-story building causing significant damage, although no casualties were reported (Israeli media, December 9, 2024). The IDF spokesperson confirmed that a UAV launched from Yemen hit the building. According to the statement, the UAV was not intercepted because it was not classified as hostile (IDF spokesperson, December 9–10, 2024).
- ◆ **December 10, 2024:** Two attacks on "military targets" in Jaffa and Ashqelon using two UAVs. Both attacks were claimed to have achieved their objectives.
- ◆ **December 13, 2024:** A joint attack with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq on "vital targets" in southern Israel using several UAVs. The Iraqi militias did not issue a corresponding statement; the IDF spokesperson reported that a UAV launched from Yemen was intercepted near Eilat before entering Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 12, 2024).
- ◆ **December 13, 2024:** Attack on a "military target" in Ashqelon using a UAV; another UAV attack on a target in "occupied Jaffa" [Tel Aviv]. The claims were unconfirmed.
- ◆ **December 16, 2024:** Attack on a "military target in occupied Jaffa" using a Palestine 2 hypersonic ballistic missile. The attack allegedly achieved its objectives; the IDF spokesperson reported that a missile launched from Yemen was intercepted before entering Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 16, 2024).
- ◆ **December 19, 2024:** Attack on two "sensitive military targets in the Jaffa area" using two Palestine 2 hypersonic ballistic missiles. The IDF spokesperson stated that the Arrow aerial defense system intercepted a missile launched from Yemen before it entered Israeli airspace. Despite the interception, the missile warhead hit a school in

Ramat Gan, causing extensive damage. No casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 19, 2024).



**Launching a Palestine 2 ballistic missile
(Houthi combat information Telegram channel, December 19, 2024)**

◆ **December 19, 2024:** UAV attack on a "military target in the Jaffa area." The IDF spokesperson reported the interception of a suspicious aerial target over the Mediterranean Sea before it entered Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2024).

◆ **December 20, 2024:** Joint attack with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq on "vital targets in southern Israel" using several UAVs; There was no corresponding announcement from the militias, and the claim of attack has not been verified.

◆ **December 20, 2024:** UAV Attack on a "military target in Jaffa.". The claim has not been verified.

◆ **December 21, 2024:** Attack on a "military target in the Jaffa area" using a Palestine 2 hypersonic ballistic missile. Saria stated that the missile had successfully hit its target; the IDF spokesperson reported that several interceptors were launched at the missile but the interception attempts failed. The missile struck a playground in a neighborhood in southern Tel Aviv-Jaffa, injuring 16 people and causing significant damage (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 21, 2024).

◆ **December 23, 2024:** Attack on a "military target" in "occupied Ashqelon" using a Jaffa UAV; attack on a "military target" in "occupied Jaffa" using a Jaffa UAV. According to Saria, the attacks were successful. The IDF spokesperson reported intercepting a UAV before it entered Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 23, 2024).

◆ **December 24, 2024:** Attack on a "military target in the occupied Jaffa area" using a Palestine 2 hypersonic ballistic missile. The IDF spokesperson reported intercepting a ballistic missile before it entered Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 24, 2024).

◆ **December 25, 2024:** Attack on a "military target in the occupied Jaffa area" using a Palestine 2 hypersonic ballistic missile. The attack allegedly successfully achieved its objectives; the IDF spokesperson reported that a ballistic missile launched from Yemen was intercepted before entering Israeli airspace (IDF spokesperson, December 25, 2024).

Appendix 2: Houthi Attacks on American Targets, December 2024

▶ Houthi attacks on American vessels in the Red Sea since the beginning of December 2024, based on statements by the Houthi forces' spokesperson, Yahya Saria (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, December 1–25, 2024):

◆ **December 1, 2024:** Attack on an American destroyer and three supply ships "connected to the American military:" Stena Impeccable, Maersk Saratoga and Liberty Grac. Saria stated that the attacks were carried out using 16 ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and one UAV in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden, claiming the strikes were precise. CENTCOM reported that the destroyers Scottsdale and O’Kane had successfully intercepted three ballistic missiles, three UAVs and a cruise missile while securing three American-flagged cargo ships in the Gulf of Aden between November 30 and December 1, 2024. According to CENTCOM, there were no casualties or damage (CENTCOM X account, December 2, 2024).

◆ **December 10, 2024:** Attack on three supply ships leaving the port of Djibouti, which, according to Saria, had previously participated in "aggression against Yemen," and an attack on two American destroyers in the Gulf of Aden escorting the supply ships. Saria claimed the attacks were conducted using several missiles and UAVs, and the operation "successfully achieved its objectives." CENTCOM stated that the destroyers Stockdale and O’Kane had repelled an attack involving "a variety of weapons launched by the Houthis" while escorting three American-owned, American-flagged commercial vessels in the Gulf of Aden on December 9–10, 2024. CENTCOM reported that the

destroyers "defeated" numerous UAVs and an anti-ship cruise missile, with no casualties or damage to civilian or military vessels or crew members (CENTCOM X account, December 10, 2024).

◆ **December 21, 2024:** Attack on the aircraft carrier Harry Truman and several destroyers using eight cruise missiles and 17 UAVs. Saria claimed the attack had prevented a strike on Yemeni territory and that an American F-18 fighter jet was downed, forcing the carrier to retreat to the northern Red Sea. CENTCOM stated that several UAVs and an anti-ship cruise missile were intercepted over the Red Sea. An F-18 fighter jet was mistakenly downed by a U.S. warship and both pilots were safely rescued (CENTCOM X account and USNI News, December 21, 2024).



Houthi notice about its attack on an American aircraft carrier and the downing of an American fighter jet (Houthi combat information Telegram channel, December 22, 2024)