



**Middle East war**

# Israel hits Yemen capital Sana'a in strikes against Houthi militants

Strikes on port and energy infrastructure aim to weaken Iran-backed group's military capabilities




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Firefighters extinguish a fire at a power station following Israeli air strikes in Sana'a, Yemen © Khaled Abdullah/Reuters

**Neri Zilber** in Tel Aviv YESTERDAY

Israeli warplanes have hit port and energy infrastructure in strikes on the capital Sana'a, marking the first major strikes backed by Houthi militants this year.

The Israeli military said it had launched strikes on the Red Sea coast at Hodeida, As-Salif and Ras Isa. At least nine people were killed in the strikes, according to local media.

The strikes early on Thursday came shortly after Israel launched ballistic missiles at the country's air defences. Residents of central Israel were evacuated and an area outside Tel Aviv was severely damaged by falling missile fragments.

Israeli defence minister Israel Katz issued a statement on Thursday, saying "Israel's long hand will reach anyone who dares." "Whoever raises a hand against the State of Israel, we will crush it. Whoever harms us — will be harmed severely."



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Firefighters work at the scene of an Israeli air strike on the Haziz power station in southern Sana'a, Yemen © Osamah Abdulrahman/AP

The Houthis began firing on merchant shipping in the Red Sea and launching drones and missiles at Israel after Gaza-2023 attack, saying they were acting in self-defense. The strikes severely disrupted shipping through the Red Sea maritime trade routes.

Together with Hamas, Lebanese militant groups in Syria, the Houthis formed an Iran-led "axis of resistance" that has been severely degraded by Israel in recent weeks.

A multinational naval task force, led by the US, has been targeting merchant vessels in the region. On Monday, the US military said it was a Houthi "command and control vessel" that was destroyed.

The Houthis have launched "hundreds" of missiles at Israel, according to the Israeli military, including one that targeted central Israel on Monday. An Israeli official said they were "already in the air" early on Thursday. The Houthis fired.

"This operation was already planned . . . minutes of a ballistic missile launch," the official said.

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A Houthi drone strike last July [killed one person in Tel Aviv](#), in what was believed to be an operation targeting a US embassy building. That attack led to the first direct long-range strikes by Israel on Yemen, targeting port facilities in Hodeida. Continued Houthi missile barrages on Israel led to a subsequent bombing raid in September.

The Houthis have vowed to maintain their attacks on both Israel and international shipping until the war in Gaza ends.

General Yahya Sare'e, the Houthis' military spokesperson, on Thursday claimed the group had launched two "hypersonic ballistic missiles" on Israeli military targets, calling it a "natural and legitimate response" to air strikes on Yemen.

"The Israeli aggression will not deter Yemen and the Yemenis from performing their religious and moral duty in responding to [Israel's] massacres in the Gaza Strip," the spokesman said in a statement.

*Additional reporting by Ahmed Al Omran*

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