

Casualties

Houthi letter stirs hopes of permanent Red Sea ceasefire

However, Yemeni rebel group warns its finger is still on the trigger to resume violence if the fragile Gaza truce collapses



The Italian frigate Marceglia of the EUNAVFOR Aspides force accompanies a convoy of container ships through the Red Sea, in November 2025. (Photo: EUNAVFOR Aspides)



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A letter sent by the Houthis to the Hamas group seems to be formally confirming a de facto ceasefire in the Red Sea, mirroring a fragile pause of hostilities in Gaza.

In the undated letter published online by the Palestinian al-Qassam Brigades, the Houthis' armed chief of staff, Yousef Hassan Al-Madani, suggests that the Yemeni rebel group will resume action only if Israel does the same in Gaza.



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“We are closely monitoring developments and declare that if the enemy resumes its aggression against Gaza, we will return to our military operations deep inside the Zionist entity, and we will reinstate the ban on Israeli navigation in the Red and Arabian Seas,” the letter said, according to a translation.

The Houthis have been justifying their attacks on more than 100 vessels in the Red Sea since November 2023 as an effort to throttle Israel’s trade and pressure its government to back down from its war in Gaza.

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The Houthis' campaign has changed the face of global shipping, diverting about half of seaborne traffic away from the Red Sea and the Suez Canal around Africa.

Longer tonne-miles have boosted shipping companies' earnings and increased their carbon emissions in the process.

Citing a still uncertain security situation, shipping companies have made no substantial moves to resume trading through the Red Sea, even after Israel and Hamas agreed to a shaky ceasefire last month.

The Houthis have effectively stopped attacking vessels since the Gaza ceasefire, but have so far refrained from making any formal statement about joining it.

A doveish interpretation of the Houthis letter will feed into the narrative of interests pleading for a full resumption of Red Sea crossings — mainly the Suez Canal Authority, which has seen its revenue collapse after the Houthis campaign and has been pushing clients to return.

However, observers following the Houthis closely warn not to read too much into the letter published earlier this week.



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Their main argument is that the text can also be interpreted in the opposite way — that the Houthis keep their finger on the trigger to resume violence at short notice.

“To me, the letter reads like a warning,” one source said.

The Houthis still hold captive the crew of the last ship they attacked and sank in July this year, the 36,800-dwt bulker Eternity C (built 2012).

They have also incarcerated more than 50 United Nations personnel active in the Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

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