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Why Yemen's Houthis are staying out of Israel-US fight with Iran – for now

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What is the Current Situation?

The Israel–US attacks on Iran have increased tensions across the Middle East.

Cities affected by rising tensions include AbDhabi, Doha, Kuwait City, Manama, and Beirut.

However, Yemen has remained relatively quiet so far, despite being part of Iran's regional alliance network.

Who Are the Houthis?

The Houthi movement is an Iran-allied group that controls northwestern Yemen and the capital Sanaa.

The group has previously carried out attacks on US and Israeli targets since the Gaza war began in October 2023.

Why Have the Houthis Not Entered the War Yet?

So far, the Houthis have limited their response to:

Strong public statements supporting Iran

Mass protests condemning US–Israeli strikes

Analysts say the group is currently avoiding direct retaliation from the US or Israel.

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Previous Israeli Strikes on the Houthis:

In August 2025, Israeli air strikes in Sanaa killed several senior Houthi officials, including:

Prime Minister Ahmed al-Rahawi

Chief of Staff Mohammed al-Ghumari

These losses made the Houthi leadership more cautious about provoking another major air campaign.

Possibility of Future Houthi Involvement:

Experts believe the Houthis may still join the war later.

Possible triggers include:

Direct attacks by the US or Israel on Houthi territory

A request from Iran

Military advances by anti-Houthi forces inside Yemen

Houthi leader Abdel-Malik al-Houthi said that “hands are on the trigger”, suggesting the group is ready to escalate if needed.

Why Iran Might Delay Using the Houthis?

Some analysts say Iran may be saving the Houthis as a strategic option.

The Houthis could act as a “reserve card” in the conflict if the war expands.

Possible Targets of Houthi Attacks:

If the group enters the war, potential targets could include:

Israel

US warships in the region

Military bases in the Middle East

Regional partners of Israel such as the UAE

The Houthis have long-range drones and missiles capable of reaching distant targets.

Importance of the Red Sea:

From 2023 to 2025, the Houthis attacked shipping routes in the Red Sea corridor.

Effects of these attacks:

At least nine mariners killed

Four ships sunk

Disruption to trade routes carrying about \$1 trillion worth of goods annually

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Impact of Iran's Weakening on the Houthis:

The US–Israel strikes reportedly killed several Iranian political and military leaders.

If Iran weakens or collapses:

Weapons supply to the Houthis may decline

Iranian influence over regional groups could weaken

The Houthi movement may face military and political challenges

Weapons Smuggling Allegations:

A United Nations investigation in 2022 found that many weapons seized in the Arabian Sea likely came from Iran.

According to a UN Security Council panel report, weapons from Russia, China, and Iran were smuggled into Yemen through sea and land routes.

Iran has denied these allegations.

Reaction Inside Yemen:

Many Yemeni civilians fear that the conflict could spread to Yemen.

Residents in Sanaa have started stockpiling food, cooking gas, rice, and flour in anticipation of possible air strikes.

However, for now Yemenis are watching the war rather than participating in it.