

Yemen, a new front against Israel



By Javad
Mohammad Ali
Staff writer

Following Israel's brutal onslaught on the Gaza Strip and the killing of thousands of Palestinians in response to Hamas's October 7 attack, anti-Israel sentiment has once again bubbled up in the Middle East region.

By launching strikes on Israel's positions and targeting its assets, resistance groups, which represent a large part of people in the region, are reminding Israel that they still consider it an occupying regime, and that they will not be silent over its atrocities in the region.

Crimes committed by Israel and its main ally, the United States, throughout the decades have forced the resistance movements to gradually strengthen their military powers. Now, the time has come to flex their muscles and show the Israeli regime that they will not forsake the Palestinians, and will not let Israel do whatever it wants.

Resistance groups are now active in many regional countries including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, which has now become one of the main fronts in the region of resistance against Israel and the US.

Like other Middle Eastern countries, Yemen has also become furious at the new Israeli atrocities in the Palestinian territories, which has claimed the lives of more than 17,000 Palestinians just in two months.

Years of fighting against military aggression by Saudi Arabia have turned the resistance movement in Yemen into a powerful military force in the region.

Along with its brave fighters, the Yemeni Army is now in possession of ballistic missiles and long range combat drones, which are capable of hitting Israel.

From the early days of the conflict in the Gaza Strip, the Ansarullah group, which overthrew the government and gained control of the country in 2014, following the Arab Spring uprisings in the region, has time and again warned the Israeli regime over its crimes in the Palestinian territories.

Attacks on Israel

Yahya Saree, military spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces, announced on October 31 that the movement launched a "large number" of rockets, ballistic missiles and drones towards Israel.

More strikes would follow "until the Israeli aggression stops," he said.

By sending missile and drone strikes against Israel, Yemen's Army aims to send a message of support for Palestinians and a signal to Israel that it can now reach it, and that they will not hesitate to use this capability in the future.

Some Yemeni missiles have the capability of reaching Israel despite a long distance between Yemen and the Palestinian territories. Israel has forced to deploy its "Arrow" defense system which is designed to take out ballistic missiles outside of the Earth's atmosphere.

It has also deployed missile boats that could also indicate that Israel may be concerned about the possibility of attacks from Yemen on Israeli ships passing through the Red Sea.

Extra cost for Israel

Confronting the resistance groups' attacks has inflicted extra cost on Israel's regime which is heavily reliable on military assistance from the United States.

On November 19, Yemen's Armed Forces seized an Israeli ship named the "Galaxy Leader" and detained dozens of its crew members in the Red Sea following warnings by the Ansarullah movement that the force will target any Israeli ship crossing the country's territorial waters.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni Armed Forces took responsibility for attacking two ships in the Red Sea on December 3, saying the country was blocking Israeli ships from passing through the Red Sea until Israel halted its military operations in Gaza.

The US Central Command claimed that American forces shot down ballistic missiles and drones used by the Yemenis in the attack.

The US, which is concerned about the spill-over of the conflict in Gaza, has sent two aircraft carriers and supporting ships to the region to support the Israeli regime.

Yemen is effectively setting their sights on one of the world's busiest shipping routes, where goods and oil are transported in large quantities.

By focusing on Bab al-Mandeb – and launching earlier attacks in the Red Sea and southern Israel – the resistance movement in Yemen appears to be trying to impose hefty financial costs on Israel, in addition to undermining its security if it chooses to prolong the war.

The Palestinian cause is important to Yemen, the full entry of which in the conflict could be concerning for Israel, as it is already engaged in border fighting with the Hezbollah resistance group in southern Lebanon, which has already entered the war.

In addition to the attacks by Hezbollah and Yemenis, other resistance groups have carried out dozens of attacks against US military forces spread throughout the Middle East in recent weeks.

If the conflict escalates into a regional war, the Ansarullah movement, which is part of the "axis of resistance," will most likely keep launching more missiles and drones at Israel.

Galaxy Leader cargo ship is escorted by Yemeni boats in the Red Sea in this photo released November 20, 2023.

REUTERS

Bayat shows contradictions in Habermas' views on Gaza

Jürgen Habermas has been widely criticized for his recent statements on the Gaza war. In this open letter, renowned Iranian-American sociologist Asef Bayat sets out to show how Habermas fails to apply his own ideas to the case of Israel-Palestine. It is a critique from within the logic of Habermasian thought. This gives it a force that will — or should — resonate with Habermas and his defenders. It is more of an invitation than a polemic. It is an attempt to engage, and New Lines Magazine published the full letter in hopes that it will do just that. A slice of that letter is reprinted below.

Dear Professor Habermas,

I read your co-authored "Principles of Solidarity" statement on the Gaza war with more than a little concern and alarm. The spirit of the statement broadly admonishes those in Germany who speak out, through statements or protests, against Israel's relentless bombardment of Gaza in response to Hamas' attacks of Oct. 7. It implies that these criticisms of Israel are intolerable because support for the state of Israel is a fundamental part of German political culture, "for which Jewish life and Israel's right to exist are central elements worthy of special protection". The principle of "special protection" is rooted in Germany's exceptional history, in the "mass crimes of the Nazi era". It is admirable that you and your country's political-intellectual class are adamant about sustaining the memory of that historic horror so that similar horrors will not befall the Jews (and, I assume and hope, other peoples). But your formulation of and fixation on German exceptionalism leaves practically no room for conversation about Israel's policies and Palestinian rights. When you confound criticisms of "Israel's actions" with "anti-Semitic reactions," you are encouraging silence and stifling debate.

academic, I am stunned to learn that in German universities — even within classrooms, which should be free spaces for discussion and inquiry — almost everyone remains silent when the subject of Palestine comes up. Newspapers, radio, and television are almost entirely devoid of open and meaningful debate on the subject. Indeed, scores of people, including Jews who have called for a ceasefire, have been fired from positions, had their events and awards canceled, and been accused of "anti-Semitism." How are people supposed to deliberate about what is right and what is wrong if they are not allowed to speak freely? What happens to your celebrated ideas of the "public sphere," "rational dialogue," and "deliberative democracy"?

The fact is that most of the critics and protests you admonish never question the principle of protecting Jewish life — and please do not confuse these rational critics of the Israeli government with the disgraceful far-right neo-Nazis or other anti-Semites, who must be vigorously condemned and confronted. Indeed, almost every statement I have read condemns Hamas attacks on Israel. These critics are not disputing the protection of Jewish life. They are

disputing the denial of Palestinian lives and Palestine's right to exist. And this is something about which your statement is tragically silent.

There is not a single reference in the statement to Israel as an occupying power or to Gaza as an open-air prison. There is nothing about this perverse disparity. This is not to speak of the everyday erasure of Palestinian life in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem. "Israel's actions," which you deem "justified in principle," have entailed dropping 6,000 bombs in six days on a defenseless population; well over 15,000 dead (70% of them women and children); 35,000 injured; 7,000 missing; and 1.7 million displaced — not to mention the cruelty of denying the population food, water, housing, security, and any modicum of dignity. Key infrastructures of life have vanished.

While, as your statement suggests, these may not technically amount to "genocidal intentions," United Nations officials have spoken in unequivocal terms of "war crimes," "forced displacement," and "ethnic cleansing." My concern here is not about how to judge "Israel's actions" from a legal perspective, but how to fathom this moral coldness and indifference you exhibit in the face of such staggering devastation. How many more lives should perish before they become worthy of attention? What meaning does the "obligation to respect human dignity" that your statement emphatically underlines have in the end? It is as though you fear that speaking of the suffering of Palestinians would diminish your moral commitment to Jewish lives. If so, how tragic it is that the righting of a colossal wrong committed in the past

should be tied to perpetuating another monstrous wrong in the present.

I fear that this twisted moral compass is related to the logic of German exceptionalism that you champion. Because exceptionalism, by definition, allows for not one universal standard but differential standards. Some people become more worthy humans, others less worthy, and still others unworthy. That logic shuts down rational dialogue and desensitizes moral consciousness; it erects a cognitive block that prevents us from seeing the suffering of others, impeding empathy.

But not everyone succumbs to this cognitive block and moral numbness. My understanding is that many young Germans privately express quite different views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from those of the country's political class. Some even participate in public protests. The young generation is exposed to alternative media and sources of knowledge and experiences different cognitive processes from the older generation. But most maintain silence in the public realm for fear of reprisal. It appears as though some kind of "hidden sphere" is emerging, ironically in democratic Germany, similar to pre-1989 Eastern Europe or under despotic rule in the Middle East today. When intimidation shuts down public expression, people tend to forge their own, alternative narratives about key social matters in private, even as they go along with the officially sanctioned views in public. Such a hidden sphere can explode when the opportunity arises.

These are unsettling times, Professor Habermas. It is precisely at such times that the wisdom, knowledge, and

above all, the moral courage of thinkers like you are most needed. Your seminal ideas about truth and communicative action, cosmopolitanism, equal citizenship, deliberative democracy, and human dignity remain immensely important. However, your Eurocentrism, German exceptionalism, and the closure of free debate about Israel and Palestine, to which you contribute, would appear to contradict these ideas. I fear that mere knowledge and awareness may not be enough. After all, how can an intellectual "know" without "understanding" and understand without "feeling," as Antonio Gramsci wondered? Only when we "feel" the suffering of one another through empathy might there be hope for our troubled world.

To quote the 13th-century Persian poet Saadi Shirazi:

Human beings are members of a whole,

In creation of one essence and soul.

If one member is afflicted with pain,

Other members uneasy will remain.

If you've no sympathy for human pain,

The name of human you cannot retain!



Philosopher Jürgen Habermas (L) and sociologist Asef Bayat
LOUISA GOULIAMAKI/AFP