



A warplane takes off from RAF Akrotiri Airbase in Cyprus to join US-led airstrikes against targets in Yemen on January 12, 2024.
● REUTERS

Yemen brushes off US, UK raids

Houthi vow to continue attacks on Israel-bound ships

International Desk

Yemen's Ansarallah movement on Friday vowed to continue attacks against Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea despite strikes by US and British forces on the Arab country.

Early on Friday, the US and Britain launched military strikes on Yemen in response to Ansarallah's attacks on Israeli-bound ships in the Red Sea in recent weeks.

US officials said targets included logistical hubs, air defense systems, and weapons storage locations. US media reported that the strikes involved fighter jets and Tomahawk missiles.

The overnight strikes followed weeks of missile and drone attacks by Yemen on Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, which has been under Israel's deadly bombardment in recent months.

"Yemen was subjected to a blatant US-British aggression to protect Israel and to stop Yemen's operations in support of Gaza," Ansar-

allah's spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam wrote on X.

"They committed foolishness with this treacherous aggression, and they were wrong if they thought that they would deter Yemen from supporting Palestine and Gaza," he said, adding that the movement will continue its attacks on Israeli ships and those heading to Israel's ports.

No justification for strikes

He said there was no justification for the strikes on Yemen because its actions do not threaten international shipping.

Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Ansarallah movement, said the US and UK bear full responsibility for "criminal aggression" against the Yemeni people and their attacks will not go unanswered or unpunished. Saree said in a statement that the US and UK targeted the capital, Sana'a, and the governorates of Hodeida, Taiz, Hajjah, and Saada, killing five individuals and wounding six others.

Condemnations

The strikes on Yemen drew condemnations from many countries in the Middle East, including some US allies. Iran on Friday lambasted the strikes, saying that the attacks were "arbitrary" and a "violation" of international law.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a statement strongly condemning the attacks, saying that the strikes were "an arbitrary action, a clear violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen, and a violation of international laws and regulations".

Kanaani warned that the attacks "will have no result other than fueling insecurity and instability in the region" as well as "diverting the world's attention from the crimes" in Gaza, where Israel has launched brutal attacks on the Palestinians since October 7.

Turning Red Sea into 'bloodbath'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the US and British strikes were

"disproportionate," alleging the US and Britain wanted to turn the Red Sea into a "bloodbath".

"First of all, they are not proportional. All of these constitute disproportionate use of force," Erdogan told journalists after Friday prayers in Istanbul.

"It is as if they aspire to turn the Red Sea into a bloodbath."

Risk of escalating conflict

Oman also condemned the attacks, warning of the risk of escalating conflict in the region.

"Oman has warned several times about the risk of the extension of the conflict in the region due to the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian territories," Oman's Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Kuwait's Foreign Ministry also expressed "great concern" about the strikes, echoing the view of Yemen's neighbor Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom voiced its own concern after the UK and US military action, calling for "self-restraint and avoiding

escalation".

Hamas resistance group in Gaza warned of "repercussions" following the attacks. "We vigorously condemn the flagrant American-British attack on Yemen. We hold them responsible for the repercussions on regional security," Hamas said on Telegram.

'Illegitimate' strikes

The Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov condemned the "illegitimate" strikes by the United States and Britain on Yemen.

"From the point of view of international law, they are illegitimate," he added.

'United, resolute' response

However, US President Joseph Biden defended the strikes, saying that they represented a "united and resolute" response to Ansarallah's attacks on international ships and that the US would "not hesitate to direct further measures" against Yemen.

In a statement released by the White House, Biden said the US and UK strikes were

carried out with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands.

In a separate statement, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also confirmed the strikes, saying the UK took "limited, necessary and proportionate action in self-defense" in order to degrade Ansarallah military capabilities and protect global shipping.

The Ansarallah resistance movement has said it is targeting Israeli-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza. It says its attacks aim to end the pounding Israeli air-and-ground offensive targeting the Gaza Strip.

The Red Sea links the Middle East and Asia to Europe via the Suez Canal, and its narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The strait is only 29 kilometers wide at its narrowest point, limiting traffic to two channels for inbound and outbound shipments, according to the US Energy Information Administration. About 10% of all oil traded at sea passes through it and an estimated \$1 trillion in goods pass through the strait annually.

Israel accused of 'incontrovertible' intent to commit genocide in Gaza at ICJ

South Africa accused Israel of "chilling" and "incontrovertible" intent to commit genocide in Gaza on the opening day of a landmark case before the UN's top court at The Hague.

Calling on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Israel to cease military operations in Gaza, lawyers for South Africa said that Israel has gone beyond its intention to eradicate Hamas and is aiming to bring about the "destruction" of the besieged territory's population. Israel was accused of breaching the UN Genocide Convention, with lawyers saying that even the October 7 attack by Hamas on the occupied territories – during which around 1,200 people were killed – could not justify such actions, according to The Independ-

ent newspaper. South Africa's Justice Minister, Ronald Lamola, opened Thursday's session saying that Israel has "crossed the line" with its bombardment of Gaza, with health officials in the Palestinian territory putting the death toll at over 23,700 people. "The intent to destroy Gaza has been nurtured at the highest level of state," Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, advocate of the High Court of South Africa, told the court. "The evidence of genocidal intent is not only chilling, it is also overwhelming and incontrovertible," Ngcukaitobi said.

Israel said Friday it was not seeking to destroy the Palestinian people, as it hit back at what it called a "profoundly distorted" and "malevolent" genocide case against it.

Tal Becker, a top lawyer representing Israel, said South Africa had "regrettably put before the court a profoundly distorted factual and legal picture".

Destruction of Palestinian life

Lawyers for South Africa told the court that Israel's military response to Hamas attack has gone beyond what is reasonable. "This killing is nothing short of destruction of Palestinian life," Adila Hassim, a South African lawyer and member of the delegation, said. "It is inflicted deliberately. No one is spared. Not even newborn babies." Post-apartheid South Africa has long defended the Palestinian cause. Although the court's findings are considered binding on parties, including both

South Africa and Israel, the court has no way to enforce them.

The court is expected to rule on possible emergency measures to halt Israel's military activities in Gaza later this month, although it will not rule at that time on the genocide allegations. Those proceedings could take years.

In an 84-page filing to the ICJ, South Africa argued that Israel is committing genocide by killing Palestinians in Gaza, causing serious mental and bodily harm, forced evacuation, widespread hunger, and by creating conditions "calculated to bring about their physical destruction." It also accused Israel of failing to stem incitement to genocide in the public pronouncements of its officials.



Record daily death toll

The Health Ministry in Gaza said Friday at least 23,708 have been killed in the territory in nearly 100 days of Israel's onslaught.

The charity Oxfam International said on Thursday that the daily death toll in Gaza was higher than any other major conflict this century. Oxfam's Sally Abi Khalil said it is "unimaginable" that the international community stands by as the killing unfolds.

Israeli strikes killed at least 59 people in Gaza overnight Thursday-Friday.



South Africa's Ambassador to the Netherlands Vusumuzi Madonsela (R) and the country's Justice Minister Ronald Lamola (2nd R) attend the hearings in South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice at The Hague, the Netherlands, on January 11, 2024.

● SELMAN AKSUNGER/ANADOLU AGENCY

A historic opening to stop Israeli genocide

By Mehdi Shakibaei
Expert on Israeli affairs

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

South Africa has filed a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of crimes of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. While many states and peoples from around the world have voiced their support of the move, some including Washington have condemned Pretoria.

South Africa may be the most perfect country to make such a case since its people have suffered immense harm under the apartheid regime as a result of its racist policies and massacres. What has made them a global role model for resisting discrimination and massacre is the laudable fight that South Africans put up against the oppression of their ruling white class under the leadership of the late Nelson Mandela.

Now, their proven track record in overthrowing an apartheid regime is coming to the aid of Palestinians who have been oppressed for decades. In the last three months, Israel has committed war crimes and genocide against Palestinians. Although the evidence of this atrocity has been readily available to everyone, South Africa's lawyers in this trial made sure to cite the tangible instances of Israel's genocidal acts. After all, killing more than 23,000 people in Gaza, two-thirds of whom were women and children, is not something that can easily be swept under the rug.

The same longing for bringing Israel to justice was expected from many European and Islamic countries, but the former group is too politically tied to Israel to do anything and the latter group do not have the jurisdiction to prosecute it. Now that South Africa has courageously stepped forward, it's only fair that these countries show the same level of enthusiasm that their peoples have shown in supporting Palestinians. It's no secret that an Israeli prime minister, whose days in office are numbered, is spearheading this genocide, as everyone including his staunchest allies are already criticizing him and planning to replace him with his leftist or centrist alternatives after the war is over.

This goes to show that the people of any country that is currently going through a period of tyranny and discrimination can take advantage of South Africa's lived experience of successfully toppling an apartheid regime. But more than that, the ICJ genocide trial presents itself as a historic opportunity to challenge Israel and its allies and stop their genocidal war machine in its tracks.