

US Blocks Yemen-Saudi Peace Deal

New sanctions on the Houthis will make it impossible for the first phase of the Saudi-Houthi peace deal to be implemented

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Global Research, February 07, 2024

[Antiwar.com](#) 6 February 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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The US is purposely blocking a Yemen peace deal that was negotiated between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia, [The New York Times reported on Tuesday](#).

The US decision to re-designate the Houthis as "[Specially Designated Global Terrorists](#)" will block the payment of public sector workers living in Houthi-controlled Yemen, who have gone without pay for years.

The payment of civil workers has been a key demand of the Houthis and [is part of the first phase of the peace deal](#). The Houthis had asked for the salaries to be paid for using oil revenue that goes to the Saudi-backed Yemeni government, whose leaders are mainly based in Saudi Arabia. It's unclear if the Saudi side agreed to the Houthi demand or if they decided to pay the salaries using other means.

The first phase of the peace deal would also fully open Yemen's airports and sea ports that have been under blockade since 2015, another aspect of the deal that will be complicated by the new US sanctions, which will go into effect later this month.

A US official told the *Times* that the US would only allow the payment of Yemeni civil salaries if the Houthis choose the path of "peace" and stop attacking shipping in the Red Sea. But the Houthis, who govern the most populated area of Yemen, have been clear the operations will only stop once the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza ends.

Instead of pressuring Israel to stop its onslaught, President Biden launched a new war against the Houthis, which has dramatically escalated the situation. The Houthis are now targeting American and British commercial shipping, and there's no sign they will back

down.

Since January 12, the US has launched at least 18 rounds of missile strikes on Houthi-controlled Yemen. President Biden has acknowledged the strikes [are not “working”](#) since they haven’t stopped Houthi attacks. But he vowed to continue bombing Yemen anyway.

The US supported a Saudi/UAE-led coalition in Yemen in a brutal war that killed [at least 377,000 people](#) between 2015 and 2022. More than half of those killed died of starvation and disease caused by the bombing campaign and blockade.

A truce between the Saudis and Houthis has been held since April 2022, but a formal peace deal hasn’t been signed. Despite the new US bombing campaign, the Saudis and Houthis appear determined not to restart the war. When President Biden launched his bombing campaign in Yemen, [Saudi Arabia urged the US to “avoid escalation.”](#)

This week, a Houthi official said the Yemeni group was ready to formally make peace with the Saudis. “Sanaa is prepared for peace with Riyadh despite the challenges posed by the US and its associated Yemeni groups,” [said Hussein al-Ezzi, the Houthi deputy foreign minister.](#)

Some members of the US and Saudi-backed Yemeni presidential council are calling for a ground campaign against the Houthis. But the council does not have much influence and is known in Yemen as the “government of hotels” since many of its members are in exile.

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