

WORLD

Yemen flare-up fuels regional stability strains

Intensifying tensions lay bare security challenges facing Mideast, experts say

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Recently, Yemen's Houthi forces have intensified clashes with Yemeni government forces on multiple fronts, while launching renewed missile and drone attacks against targets in Saudi Arabia. The escalation has caused civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure, further worsening the country's humanitarian crisis.

Analysts said the latest flare-up reflects not only intensifying internal divisions and infighting in Yemen, but also the broader security challenges facing the Middle East amid heightened regional tensions and rivalry among major regional powers.

At least seven people were killed and 40 others wounded in airstrikes in Yemen's southwestern province of Taiz on Sunday, Houthi-run media reported.

Houthi-run Al-Masirah TV said that warplanes struck shops at the Central Market in Al-Ta'iziyah district, east of Taiz city, describing the casualties as civilians and blaming Saudi Arabia for the attack.

Yemeni government forces gave a different account, saying in a statement on social media platform X that "our warplanes launched strikes" targeting a Houthi military camp and armored vehicles in the same area.

On Saturday, the Yemeni government forces said that warplanes struck Houthi supply lines, reinforcements, and weapons depots across the southwestern province of Taiz, leaving dozens of fighters killed or wounded.

In a statement on social media platform X, the Yemeni Armed Forces Media Center cited a government military source as saying that warplanes struck a Houthi supply convoy on Al-Sitteen Street, north of Taiz city, scoring "direct hits".

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said on Saturday that Saudi warplanes had carried out 27 airstrikes across six Yemeni provinces over the previous 24 hours.

Sarea said the latest attacks brought the Houthi tally of Saudi air and missile strikes since the current snarl to 1,059.

Fighting between Yemeni government forces and the Houthi group has intensified across Taiz and Lahj recently after the group seized the strategic port city of Mocha and Mayyun Island in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait earlier this month.

Yemen's conflict erupted in late 2014 when the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa and much of northern Yemen, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene in March 2015 in support of the internationally recognized Yemeni government.

Wang Zezhuang, professor at the Institute of International and Regional Studies and director of the Iranian Studies Center at Beijing Language and Culture University, said the immediate trigger for the rapid escalation of the conflict in Yemen was the breakdown of the fragile equilibrium that had largely held since the 2022 truce.

Houthi forces and the Yemeni government have yet to resolve a range of outstanding issues, including power-sharing arrangements, the integration of armed

groups, the management of ports, the distribution of oil revenues, the payment of public-sector salaries and the reopening of roads, he said.

"In practice, the so-called ceasefire has not brought an end to the conflict, but has shifted much of the confrontation away from the traditional front lines toward economic and political arenas, including blockades, fiscal disputes and military deterrence," Wang said. "As efforts to advance a comprehensive political settlement have stalled, the Houthis have increasingly turned to military pressure to strengthen their position on the battlefield and at the negotiating table."

He said that at a deeper level, Yemen's war has never been simply a confrontation between the government and anti-government forces.

Long-standing hostilities

"The conflict is rooted in long-standing tensions between the north and south, disputes over the distribution of power between central and local authorities, and competing interests over strategic economic assets, including ports, oil and gas resources, and fiscal revenues," he added.

Ding Long, a professor at Shanghai International Studies University's Middle East Studies Institute, said the Houthi forces also pose a direct security challenge to Saudi Arabia.

"In recent months, Houthis have repeatedly launched missile and drone attacks targeting Riyadh and key Saudi energy infrastructure. Such attacks have raised concerns over the security of the country's major population centers and energy assets," he said.

The Houthi forces have effectively taken control of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, he said, adding that while they are currently targeting only Saudi ships, in reality, very few vessels from other countries would take risks and pass through the strait.

The shipping route through the waterway, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal accounts for about 12 percent of global cargo traffic, he said. "If this route becomes unsafe, it could significantly hinder Saudi oil exports and pose a serious threat to the security of global supply chains," Ding said.

Wang added that an escalation of the conflicts in Yemen could further deepen tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"Although the two sides continue to maintain diplomatic communication, the Houthis' escalating attacks against Saudi Arabia could further fuel Saudi concerns over Iran's support for regional armed groups, thereby narrowing the room for diplomatic mediation," he said.

As the conflict in Yemen escalates, its impact on the security of global energy supplies is becoming increasingly apparent, he said.

This not only places Saudi Arabia in a dilemma between "escalating its response" and "exercising restraint", but also poses a direct challenge to the "Saudi-Iranian reconciliation" that has taken shape in recent years, putting the already fragile security order in the Middle East to a comprehensive test, Wang added.

Xinhua contributed to this story.



A family carrying personal belongings walk on a flooded street after heavy rainfall as a strong coastal storm batters the US northeast coast in Wildwood, New Jersey, on Saturday. VINCENT ALBAN / REUTERS

Powerful storm pummels US northeast

NEW YORK — Heavy rain and strong winds battered the northeastern United States on Sunday as an unusually powerful autumn storm intensified, leaving tens of thousands without power and US media reporting one person dead.

New York, Boston and Philadelphia were all in the firing line of the "Nor'easter" — so labeled for its northeasterly winds — as authorities warned of potential major flooding and road closures.

The storm continued to dump rain during its "churn off the coast of the northern Mid-Atlantic and southern New England Saturday afternoon", the National Weather Service said in its latest forecast.

The storm was expected to move toward New Jersey and Long Island "through tonight, resulting in the full force of this Nor'easter" impacting the region by Sunday morning, forecasters said.

Additionally, "major coastal flooding is expected along the Mid-Atlantic Coast over multiple high tide cycles coming off a full moon through the weekend," NWS said.

New York state Governor Kathy Hochul said the storm was bearing down on Saturday on coastal areas of New York City and Long Island.

"Conditions are extremely dangerous. Anyone who goes in or near the water this weekend is literally gambling with their life," Hochul said in a press briefing.

In Brooklyn, a 56-year-old man was killed when winds toppled a tree that struck him, US media reported.

Nearly 80,000 customers in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania were without power as of 1:30 am on Sunday, according to the monitoring tool poweroutage.com.

Up to 15 centimeters of rain are expected on Long Island over the next few days.

"We expect waves as tall as 20 feet (six meters) in some areas," Hochul said.

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani warned residents of the country's most populated city about strong wind gusts and the possibility of downed power lines, saying, "Don't travel if you don't have to."

The storm forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights on Sunday, including 171 to and from Boston's Logan airport alone, and ongoing delays were reported across the region, according to tracker Flight-Aware.

Major airlines including JetBlue, United and American issued travel alerts allowing passengers to change their flights without incurring fees.

The United Nations, where world leaders are gathered for the organi-

zation's General Assembly, urged media outlets covering the event to clear broadcasting equipment from outside the New York headquarters due to strong winds.

Major cultural events were also called off, including the Global Citizen and All Things Go festivals in New York, and Oceans Calling in Maryland.

"Safety has to come first. This is the first time in 14 years we've had to cancel," said organizers of the Global Citizen event in Central Park, which was meant to feature Lenny Kravitz, Lauryn Hill, Alicia Keys and country stars Lainey Wilson and Shaboozey.

About 12 centimeters of rain was forecast in areas of Massachusetts including Boston — the equivalent of more than a month's worth of rainfall.

After much uproar over his tour, British pop singer Ed Sheeran's weekend concerts near Boston were

canceled because of the storm, which whipped up wind gusts of about 110 kilometers per hour along the New England coast.

Some coastal areas of North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey have already seen flooding this week.

Nor'easters can occur year-round but are more frequent between fall and early spring. They almost always bring heavy rain or snowfall, along with strong wind gusts.

Earlier this year, a Nor'easter that pummeled the northeast disrupted hundreds of flights and left thousands of homes and businesses without power.

That storm came weeks after the region recovered from a devastating winter weather system that was linked to more than 100 deaths.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Briefly

S. ASIA Floods, landslides kill 56 in India, 14 in Nepal

Heavy rain and storms have triggered floods and landslides that killed 56 people in India, while in Nepal, 14 have died, with authorities warning on Sunday that more flash floods are possible. India's Uttar Pradesh state recorded 66.5 millimeters of rain between Friday and Sunday morning, compared with a normal 7.6 mm for the period, Hrishikesh Bhaskar Yashod, a state official said. In a separate incident in Nepal, several local workers were missing after an avalanche buried the 7,126-meter Himlung base camp in the northern Manang district, hiking officials said.

SWITZERLAND Voters to decide on neutrality in polls

Swiss voters went to the polls on Sunday to decide on whether to approve a more restrictive form of neutrality that would block their country from imposing economic sanctions or cooperating with NATO. According to the latest projections by state broadcaster SRF, more than two-thirds voted against a proposal for a strictly defined version of neutrality to be written into the constitution.

CAMBODIA Area set up to protect Siamese crocodiles

Cambodia has established its first crocodile genetic conservation area to safeguard the critically endangered Siamese crocodile, conservationists announced in a joint press release on Saturday. Announced by the Ministry of Environment, the Boeung Veal Veng site features a 315-hectare nesting area. The area is home to the largest remaining wild population of Siamese crocodiles, with about 40 individuals.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



Massive grievance

Residents stand behind police tape near the scene where gunmen armed with assault rifles stormed a bar in Johannesburg, South Africa, on Sunday. The shooting took place the previous night, killing 17 people and wounding 15 others. In a separate shooting at an entertainment venue in a township outside Cape Town early on Sunday, gunmen killed at least 10 people and wounded 11 more. EMMANUEL CROSET / AFP

