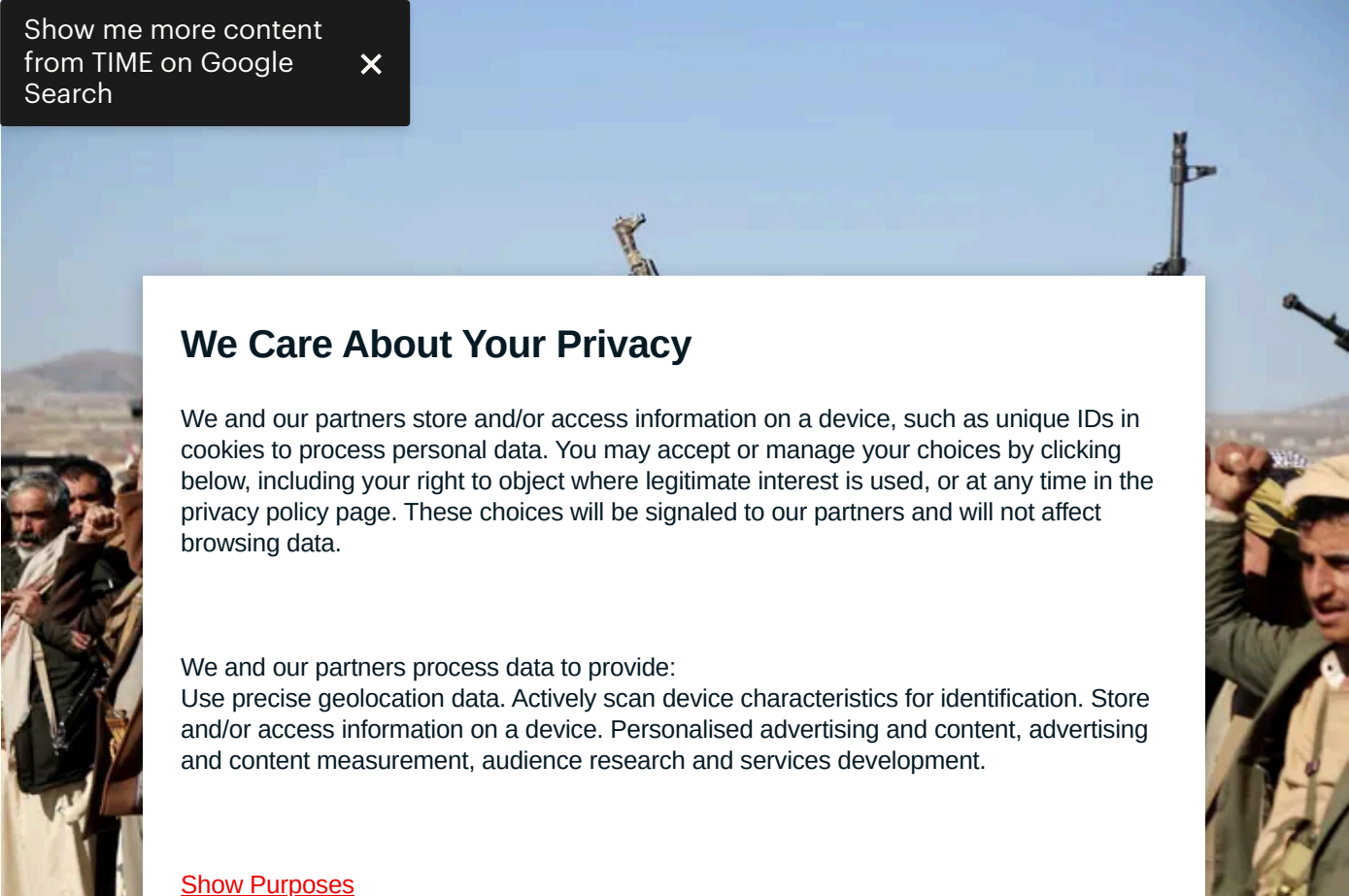


WORLD YEMEN

# What the New Houthi Terrorist Designation Means for Yemen

ADD TIME ON GOOGLE

Show me more content from TIME on Google Search



## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide: Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

Show Purposes

Accept All

Reject All

Powered by Ketch

Yemen's Houthis... the US and U

by Juwayriah WRIGHT IS

MAR 7, 2025 10

ts main allies

**W**hen the U.S. returned Yemen’s Houthi movement to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations on Mar. 4, the decision not only reversed the Biden Administration policy—it also reignited debates over U.S. strategy in Yemen’s decade-long civil war and its humanitarian fallout. The Houthis have attacked Red Sea shipping and launched missiles toward both Israel and Saudi Arabia. But critics argue the terrorist designation—which carries penalties for doing business with the faction—could exacerbate an already dire situation where millions of civilians rely on aid to survive.

“The United States will not tolerate any country engaging with terrorist organizations like the Houthis in the name of practicing legitimate international business,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in the statement announcing the designation.

## Trending Shorts

[MORE >](#)

Iran suppl  
Saudi citie

### We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide:  
Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

Powered by Ketch

quiet Deat  
nian War  
target  
inished,

and the Assad regime no longer controlling Syria, the Yemeni militia has grown more prominent in Iran’s “axis of resistance.” Both the U.S. and [Israel](#) have launched bombing raids on the Houthis, including an [October U.S.srike](#) by B-2 stealth bombers on underground weapons caches.

But restoring the “terrorist” designation may only have a tangential impact on the Houthis, says Nader Hashemi, associate professor of Middle East and Islamic politics at Georgetown University. “The sanctions that go with it don't really weaken these countries,” he says. “They're mostly, I think, grandstanding and an opportunity for, in this case, the Trump administration to try and distinguish himself from Biden and to present himself as really standing for himself against America's enemies.”

*Advertisement*

Other experts agreed the move is more about domestic political posturing than achieving [change](#) on the ground. Some said it may actually heighten the threat to shipping.

“If the Houthis are designated as terrorists, in that sense, the U.S. would be sending a message on, forcing the Houthis to have to be more careful about the price of oil and the Middle East.”

“When the Houthis were in the Alley, Sen. Rubio has been threatened with

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide:  
Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

## Who a

Powered by  Ketch

The Zaydi Shia Islamic religious ideology of the Houthis allows for recasting violence as resistance. The group’s founder, Hussein al-Houthi, framed the movement as a revival of Zaydi identity against perceived marginalization by Yemen’s Sunni-majority governments and growing Salafi-Wahhabi influences. “It’s a hodgepodge of sorts,” says Bader Mousa Al-Saif, assistant professor of history at Kuwait University and a fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. “It’s messianic, it’s eclectic, it gives full subservience to the descendants of the Prophet.”

Under the current leadership of Hussein’s brother, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the group has weaponized this ideology, portraying its fight as a divine struggle against foreign “occupiers” and neighbors, notably Saudi Arabia, which invaded in 1934.

“These [radical ideologies] are the things that motivate action and motivate violence,” Al-Saif stresses. “Policymakers are treating symptoms, they’re not treating the origins of the issue. If you go out and you try to block ships or you try to safeguard ships, you’re not dealing with the issue on the ground. [The Houthis] are on the ground in Yemen. They’ve been trying to close up on their own population. They’re not allowing people to express themselves... so we need to listen to Yemeni civilians.”

### We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide:  
Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.



Yemen has  
countries,  
surfaced  
Arabia and  
have ham  
dozens of  
controlled  
U.N. World  
Houthi-co

“So many  
the United  
Senior Po  
stands as

two  
it  
Saudi  
alries  
ed  
uary, the  
ention in  
ce with  
o Alasar,  
ent that  
marily.”

Advertisement

# What is Yemen's humanitarian situation?

An estimated 19.5 million people now need humanitarian assistance and protection services – 1.3 million more people than last year. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and among the worst humanitarian crises in the world. In 2024, USAID provided Yemen with roughly \$620 million in total aid. Trump has since shuttered the agency. And though Secretary Rubio issued a waiver for life-saving humanitarian aid, aid groups in Yemen claim operations remain suspended.

Advocates warn that being listed as a terrorist state by the U.S. may stifle humanitarian aid from other sources, which 80 percent of the population are critically in need of. “Innocent people are going to suffer,” says Hashemi. “Any humanitarian organization that wants to pursue exporter contracts or engage in bank transfers in order to facilitate aid will now be blocked because of this terrorist designation.”

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

A report from the Houthis, h... flows.” It c... authorize... reality is l...

“While the humanitarian banking s... sector in Y... authorized... counterte... millions o...

the cal aid ways to ts say the e al ivate e se U.S. likelihoods of

Advertisement

“The real risk to the Yemeni economy and to Yemeni livelihood is this issue of over-compliance,” Alley says. Some parties may avoid Yemen altogether out of fear of running afoul of the U.S. Treasury Department, which enforces the sanction. “This has a knock-down effect throughout the country, so we have to see how it plays out.”

“We shouldn't limit ourselves to such an option,” Al-Saif says. “We should have an integrated toolkit that looks at different aspects without having the average Yemeni impacted.”

## Must-Reads from TIME

‘Safe and sound’: How a U.S. Airman Shot Down in Iran Was Rescued From a Mountain Crevice >

What to Know >

Iranian President >

### We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide:  
Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

Home

Politics

Powered by  Ketch

Health

Entertainment

AI

Sports

World

Technology

Business

Newsletters

Science

## More

The TIME Vault

TIME Studios

TIME Africa

Video

TIME France

Red Border

TIME For Kids

Supplied Partner Content

TIME F

### We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

Our M

We and our partners process data to provide:

Conta

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

Press

Media

Reprin

Subsc

Powered by  Ketch

[Access My Digital Magazine](#)[Shop the Cover Store](#)[Manage My Subscription](#)[Give a Gift](#)[Global Help Center](#)

© 2026 TIME USA, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy](#), [\(Your Privacy Rights\)](#) and [Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information](#).

TIME may receive compensation for some links to products and services on this website. Offers may be subject to change without notice.

## We Care About Your Privacy

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

Powered by  Ketch