



US strike on Ras Issa port constitutes unlawful use of force, warrants immediate investigation and accountability



An aerial view of Ras Issa Port in Al-Hudaydah, western Yemen, following US airstrikes on the site (Al-Masirah TV)

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Geneva – The US military strike on Yemen’s Ras Issa oil port—which resulted in dozens of civilian casualties, including medics—raises serious concerns of grave violations of international humanitarian law, potentially amounting to war crimes. An independent investigation must be conducted to ensure full accountability and prevent more attacks that endanger civilian lives and undermine the legal protections afforded to civilians during armed conflicts.

United States warplanes carried out approximately 14 airstrikes on the Ras Issa oil port on Thursday evening in Yemen’s western province of Al-Hudaydah, killing around 80 individuals and injuring more than 150, including port workers and first responders who had rushed to the site to assist victims. The attack also caused widespread destruction to the port’s infrastructure, which is vital for importing fuel into the country.

Furthermore, US forces took no precautionary measures to protect civilians or reduce harm, nor did they issue any prior warning to the port’s authorities, staff, or any relevant party, despite being fully aware of the civilian nature of the site. The use of heavy ordnance against a known civilian facility suggests a deliberate disregard for the risk of mass casualties, explaining the high death toll and raising serious suspicions of a blatant violation of the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution under international humanitarian law.

The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) stated that the strike targeted a “source of fuel” at Ras Issa port, accusing the Houthi movement of using fuel imported via the port for “illegal revenue” to support its military activities and gain unlawful economic benefit. CENTCOM claimed the attacks were intended

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to “degrade the [Houthis’] economic source of power”.

Such justifications do not legitimise the complete destruction of a civilian facility and the extensive loss of civilian life, however. These actions suggest possible serious violations of international humanitarian law that cannot be justified by military necessity.

The CENTCOM statement reflects a troubling US disregard for international legal obligations, particularly as the statement ignores the fact that the strikes clearly violate the core principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity. The targeted facility was civilian, and the civilian harm caused is grossly disproportionate to the declared military advantage of weakening the Houthis' economic base. The use of force against such infrastructure, especially without clear necessity, inflicted severe harm on civilians and further debilitated Yemen's fuel import capabilities.

Euro-Med Monitor notes that the Houthi group has explicitly declared its military operations in the Red Sea to be in response to the ongoing Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip. This should warrant a diplomatic response to address the underlying crisis, but the US has instead opted for military escalation as its sole course of action, while simultaneously increasing its political and military support for Israel; Israel has therefore been enabled to continue committing genocide in the Strip with impunity. This approach by the US clearly reflects the double standards in its foreign policy, where military intervention is justified under the guise of regional security, while in practice it exacerbates armed conflicts, worsens humanitarian crises, and prolongs civilian suffering.

Given the civilian status of the Ras Issa port and the heavy human toll, the US strike raises strong presumptions of a war crime under international law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 1977

Additional Protocol I, the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the customary rules of international humanitarian law. These instruments prohibit direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and obligate parties to a conflict to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and minimise harm—even when targeting legitimate military objectives.

The use of force in this context constitutes a serious breach of the UN Charter and the peremptory norms of international law. Article 2(4) of the Charter strictly prohibits the threat or use of force in international relations, except in two narrowly defined cases: self-defence, in response to an imminent armed attack under Article 51, provided that such force is proportionate and necessary; or when explicitly authorised by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Urgent international action is needed to investigate the attack and hold those responsible accountable under international law, to safeguard civilian lives, and to uphold the legal frameworks established to protect civilians.

Euro-Med Monitor emphasises that the recent US airstrike targeting the Ras Issa port in Yemen constitutes an unlawful use of force, as it lacks any recognised legal basis under international law.

Enabling US military operations with no legitimate legal mandate not only represents a flagrant breach of the UN Charter, but also undermines the international legal order that upholds state sovereignty and restricts the arbitrary use of force in international relations. Urgent international action is needed to ensure adherence to legal standards, curb unlawful military interventions, and hold perpetrators accountable for violations committed against Yemeni civilians.

Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor condemns the US use of unlawful force and its escalation of violence in the region. Instead of targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, the US should be pursuing diplomatic measures aimed at de-escalation and addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Relevant international bodies must immediately launch an independent investigation into the Ras Issa port attack to identify those responsible, ensure legal accountability, and provide redress to the victims and their families. The United States must cease its unlawful military campaign in Yemen, refrain from targeting civilians or essential infrastructure under any pretext, and fully comply with international humanitarian law—particularly the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity.

The international community must compel the United States to uphold its legal obligations

US strike on Ras Issa port constitutes unlawful use of force, warrants immediate investigation and accountability under international law; end its documented complicity in Israel's ongoing crimes, including the US-Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip; and halt all forms of political and military support that continue to enable such violations without consequence.



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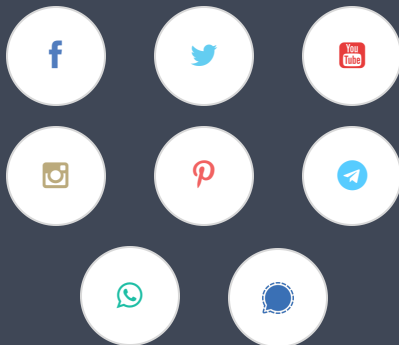
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