# HackMUN VI

## DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: THE RED SEA



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### **Note From the Chairs**

#### **Greetings Delegates!**

Our names are Meredith Lee and Shreyas Kuniyil and it is our pleasure to welcome you to the Red Sea Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC). We, alongside our HackMUN staff, are extremely honored to bring you this committee. As a delegate, we hope that you will sharpen your leadership, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. Through debate, we will navigate layered economic, political, and humanitarian issues regarding tensions surrounding the Red Sea. As delegates, you will step into the shoes of countries to sway the outcome of the situation. To guide your preparations and ensure an engaging experience, we have prepared this background guide for you, which contains historical context, the issue at hand, and involved nations. Please read all the contents of this guide to better understand the events that lead to our committee. We encourage you to research beyond this guide to enhance your understanding of your specific position.

If you are new to Model UN, welcome! MUN is home to one of the most encouraging communities in high school. The various experiences and perspectives that people bring to these conferences are what make Model UN so special. Try your best, ask questions, and embrace the opportunity to learn.

We wish you all a great HackMUN and look forward to the diplomatic resolve, passion, and joy that you will bring to this conference. Please contact us with any questions. See you at HackMUN VI!

Sincerely,

Meredith Lee, Secretary General, HackMUN VI Shreyas Kuniyil, Undersecreatry General, HackMUN VI Chairs of the DISEC: Red Sea Committee redseahackmun@gmail.com

### **Committee Procedure**

#### **Debate Format**

This committee follows standard parliamentary procedure, which includes the following procedures: roll call, setting the agenda, yields, points, caucusing, resolutions and amendments, and voting.

#### **Position Paper Policy**

If you wish to be considered for an award this year at HackMUN VI, you must submit a position paper. Position Papers help you prepare effectively for debate and engage meaningfully with the topic before HackMUN. Furthermore, they provide an opportunity for you to communicate unique aspects of your position and possible solutions and objectives for the committee to your chairs. Please send position papers at least one page in length, double spaced, in Google Doc or PDF format to redseahackmun@gmail.com no later than March 7th.

### Introduction to the Committee

The Red Sea, connecting the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal, is in turmoil. Once a vital artery for global trade, this strategic waterway is now a battlefield. Since late 2023, attacks on commercial vessels have escalated, driven by Yemen's Houthi rebels, who claim to be retaliating against broader regional conflicts. These assaults, carried out with drones, missiles, and speedboats, have jeopardized international shipping, endangered lives, and sent economic shockwaves across the globe.



The Houthis, officially known as Ansar Allah, emerged in the 1990s as a Zaydi Shiite movement in northern Yemen, initially as a response to perceived political and economic marginalization by the Yemeni government. Their grievances deepened over time due to the government's alignment with Saudi Arabia, economic neglect of northern regions, and increasing separatist tensions. The group's opposition to foreign influence in Yemen, particularly from Saudi Arabia and the United States, intensified following the 2011 Yemeni uprising and political transition.

The Houthis took control of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, in 2014, forcing the internationally recognized government into exile. This sparked a Saudi-led military intervention in 2015, turning the internal conflict into a proxy war involving regional and global powers. Over the years, the Houthis have strengthened their military capabilities with support from Iran, permitting them to further escalate tensions. They now view

attacks on Red Sea shipping as a means to exert pressure on their adversaries, both regionally and internationally, while also aligning themselves with broader anti-Western and anti-Saudi narratives. Now, the non-state Houthis control much of northern Yemen.



Houthi militants and tribal members hold a demonstration opposing U.S. and U.K. airstrikes on Houthi-controlled military locations near Sanaa, Yemen, on Sunday, January 14, 2024. (AP Photo) AP

12% of the world's commerce, including oil, food, and essential goods, flow through the Suez Canal. So, these disruptions impact global supply chains, drive up costs, and create economic instability, especially for nations reliant on maritime imports. As the attacks continue, the world faces the challenge of securing this critical waterway without igniting a wider war. The turmoil surrounding this vital route for oil shipments, commercial goods, and military logistics involves regional actors in the Red Sea and Middle East, as well as global military and economic stakeholders. These attacks not only threaten the sanctity of international trade and freedom of navigation, but also have implications for regional stability, the global economy, and humanitarian crises in Yemen.

The Houthis justify their attacks on merchant vessels as retaliation for foreign interventions, particularly in the ongoing conflict in Gaza. However, their actions violate UN Security Council resolutions and disrupt humanitarian aid into Yemen. In March of 2024, the UK-owned bulk carrier MV Rubymar sank in the Red Sea after being struck by a Houthi anti-ship ballistic missile, and attack on the MV True Confidence, a Barbados-flagged bulk carrier, marked the first civilian casualties of Houthi attacks on merchant shipping. Additionally, the Houthi's actions are in violation of numerous UN resolutions, including Resolution 2216, which imposes a targeted arms embargo.



This photo provided by Yemeni Al-Joumhouria shows the 'Rubymar' sinking in the Red Sea, on March 7, 2024. (Photo by Al-Joumhouriah channel via Getty Images) Getty Images

Various world powers attempt to influence the situation. The United States, United Kingdom, and their allies have launched Operation Prosperity Guardian, a naval initiative aimed at deterring Houthi aggression. Yet, despite these efforts, ships continue to be attacked, demonstrating the limits of conventional military deterrence. Tehran has long been accused of backing the Houthis with weapons, intelligence, and military training. While Iran denies direct involvement in the Red Sea assaults, its influence is unmistakable. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other nations dependent on Red Sea trade are grappling with the fallout. The Suez Canal, a major revenue source for Egypt, is seeing reduced traffic as ships reroute around Africa, which is a costly and time-consuming alternative.

### The Path Forward

The clock is ticking. History has shown that maritime conflicts can escalate into full-scale wars. If the Red Sea crisis is not addressed, it could disrupt not just regional but global stability. The UN Security Council has passed multiple resolutions, yet enforcement remains weak. Military patrols have increased, yet attacks persist. The world must act decisively to restore security or else chaos may deepen. The decisions made in the coming months will shape the fate of the Red Sea, the stability of global trade, and the lives of those closest to war.

The key questions now are:

- 1. How can the international community protect commercial vessels while ensuring humanitarian aid reaches those in need?
- 2. Should military intervention be escalated, or would diplomatic engagement yield better results?
- 3. How can the UN and other organizations strengthen enforcement of arms embargoes and prevent the illicit flow of weapons fueling the conflict?
- 4. Is there a viable path to long-term stability in the Red Sea?

#### **Topic 1: The Economic and Human Toll**

The consequences of this conflict extend far beyond the waters of the Red Sea. Shipping companies, facing the risk of attacks, are now adjusting their shipping routes to move around Africa's Cape of Good Hope, increasing travel times by up to two weeks and raising shipping costs by as much as 50%. This leads to inflation, supply shortages, and financial strain, especially on developing economies.



#### Suez Canal vs. Cape of Good Hope shipping routes

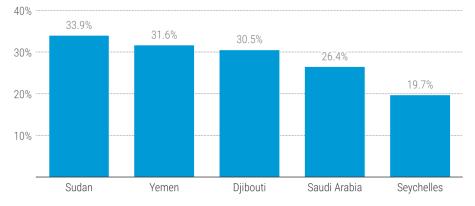
Source: Global Maritime Hub, S&P Global Commodity Insights

Yemen, already suffering from one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, is spiraling further into disaster. The country relies on imports for 90% of its food and medical supplies and faces worsening shortage and famine risks. Over 17 million Yemenis face acute food insecurity, and worsening shortages of medicine and essential goods threaten millions more. Attacks on ships, combined with the fear of further escalation, are delaying crucial aid deliveries. Furthermore, the inability to import critical goods has led to medicine shortages, exacerbating the fragile healthcare system and malnutrition rates among children. The crisis ripples beyond Yemen, as it affects neighboring nations reliant on the Red Sea trade routes. Countries along the Horn of Africa, already vulnerable to food insecurity, are experiencing rising grain prices and worsening poverty. Meanwhile, military escalation risks draw more countries into the issue and threaten broader regional conflict.



### Importance of Suez Canal for selected countries

Share (as a percentage) of trade volume, in tons, going through the Suez Canal, 2022



*Note:* The Suez Canal does not publish transit statistics based on countries of origin or destination. UNCTAD estimated the shares of foreign trade volumes that pass through the Suez Canal, based on origin and destination trade data (by volume, not value) sourced from MDS Transmodal. The estimated shares are for total foreign trade and not only maritime.

Source: UNCTAD calculations, based on data from MDS Transmodal

#### **Key Questions**

- How can the international community protect commercial vessels while maintaining humanitarian aid access to Yemen?
- How can humanitarian organizations safely operate within the conflict zone to provide essential aid?
- What economic mechanisms can mitigate the impact of rising trade costs?

#### **Topic 2: Illicit Arms Trade and Regional Destabilization**

The Houthis' military capabilities have grown alarmingly and have raised the questions of where these weapons come from and why global embargoes have failed.

Investigations point to Iranian-backed arms smuggling networks, with reports of missiles, drones, and anti-ship weaponry reaching the Houthis through stealthy supply chains. Though the UN Security Council's Resolution 2216 imposes a strict arms embargo, enforcement has been patchy at best. Smugglers exploit the vast and poorly monitored waters of the Gulf of Aden, disguising weapons as commercial shipments.



Houthi spokesperson Muhammad Abdul Salam with Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of Iran in 2019.

Efforts to tighten enforcement have so far been insufficient. Naval patrols intercept only a fraction of illegal shipments, and the reluctance of world powers to confront key suppliers like Iran complicates diplomatic efforts. Some intelligence sources have even suggested that North Korea could be involved in covert arms transfers, though concrete evidence remains elusive. The unchecked flow of arms not only empowers Houthis' attacks, but risks prolonging conflict, destabilizing neighboring countries, and intensifying regional rivalries.

#### **Key Questions**

- How can the UN and allied nations strengthen enforcement of arms embargoes?
- Should there be greater international sanctions or naval interventions against violators?
- What role can regional organizations play in reducing arms smuggling?

#### **Topic 3: Maritime Security and Geopolitical Power Struggles**

These attacks in the Red Sea have upended a fundamental principle of international law: freedom of navigation. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), commercial vessels have the right to move freely through international waters. But the Houthis have implemented targeted strikes that have turned key shipping routes into high-risk zones.

The international response has been divided. Western nations, led by the United States and the United Kingdom, have supported military patrols through Operation Prosperity Guardian, yet attacks persist. Meanwhile, China and Russia have warned against escalation, advocating diplomatic solutions but stopping short of direct intervention. Furthermore, regional rivalries and strategic interests affect the geopolitical dynamic. Iran continues to support the Houthis while engaging in regional diplomacy, and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt pursue stronger naval security measures to safeguard the Red Sea.



The USS Mason and Japanese destroyer Akebono conducted joint drills in the Gulf of Aden on Nov. 25, 2023, enhancing interoperability through boarding, helicopter, and tactical exercises. Deployed in the U.S. 5th Fleet, the USS Mason supports maritime security in the Middle East. Credit: Petty Officer 3rd Class Samantha Alaman

Failure to protect the Red Sea could not only cripple trade but embolden more non-state actors to challenge global maritime laws. So, countries must weigh how far the international community should go to defend commercial trade, and what risks a full-scale military conflict may pose.

#### **Key Questions**

- Is military force justified under international law to protect trade routes?
- Should the Houthis be treated as a terrorist organization or a political entity with grievances?
- Are there diplomatic measures that could de-escalate tensions without military intervention?

### Positions

**Note to Delegates:** Please read through the descriptions of your country as well as the descriptions of other countries. These descriptions outline important policy perspectives and unique features of each country in the committee.

**Yemen:** As the country where the Houthi rebels are based, Yemen is at the center of this crisis. The internationally recognized government condemns the Houthi attacks, while the rebels justify their actions as a response to regional conflicts. Yemen remains in dire need of humanitarian aid. Its fragile economy, heavily reliant on imports through the Red Sea, means security measures must be balanced with economic and humanitarian concerns.

**Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia views the Houthis as an Iranian proxy and has led military operations against them since 2015. The kingdom is particularly invested in securing maritime routes for its oil exports and supports UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which calls for an arms embargo on the Houthis. Riyadh has recently engaged in backchannel negotiations with the Houthis but remains committed to preventing further attacks on shipping lanes.

**Iran:** Iran has been accused of supplying weapons and intelligence to the Houthis, claims that Tehran denies. It sees the Red Sea tensions as part of a broader power struggle with Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Iran has framed the Houthi attacks as justified resistance against Western and Israeli actions and remains a key player in arms proliferation discussions.

**United States:** The U.S. leads Operation Prosperity Guardian, a coalition aimed at securing Red Sea trade routes. The U.S. argues that Houthi attacks threaten global commerce and regional stability. It has conducted airstrikes on Houthi infrastructure and increased naval patrols, emphasizing freedom of navigation as a national priority.

**United Kingdom:** The UK has joined the U.S.-led operations in the Red Sea, conducting airstrikes against Houthi targets. As a permanent UN Security Council member, it advocates

for strict enforcement of arms embargoes and maritime security. London is also concerned about trade disruptions through the Suez Canal.

**China:** China has significant economic interests in Red Sea stability due to its Belt and Road Initiative and trade routes. While condemning Houthi attacks, Beijing has abstained from UN resolutions supporting military intervention. It calls for diplomatic de-escalation, fearing that military responses could harm trade relationships.

**Russia:** Russia opposes Western-led military actions in the Red Sea and remains skeptical of Operation Prosperity Guardian. It maintains relations with Iran and has not directly condemned the Houthis. Moscow's arms sales and strategic positioning in the Middle East make it a key player in discussions on arms embargoes.

**Egypt**: The prolonged instability in the Red Sea has significantly reduced traffic through the Suez Canal, leading to a decline in revenue from \$9.4 billion in the 2022–2023 fiscal year to \$7.2 billion in 2023–2024. This financial strain has prompted Egypt to advocate for robust international measures to secure Red Sea shipping lanes. However, Cairo remains cautious about military escalations, preferring a regional security framework that emphasizes Arab state collaboration over Western-led interventions.

**Israel**: Facing direct threats from Houthi missiles and drones, Israel has intensified its calls for international action against Iran's support for the Houthis. The Israeli Defense Forces have enhanced their defensive measures, including the deployment of advanced missile defense systems in the southern region. Additionally, Israel has bolstered intelligence-sharing with allies and conducted targeted operations to neutralize perceived threats from Houthi positions.

**United Arab Emirates (UAE)**: The UAE continues to play a pivotal role in Red Sea security by increasing naval patrols to safeguard its ports and shipping lanes. Despite reducing direct military involvement in Yemen, Abu Dhabi supports stringent enforcement of arms embargoes and collaborates in multinational maritime security operations. The UAE's strategic interests in the Horn of Africa have occasionally led to diplomatic friction with Egypt and Sudan, particularly concerning differing approaches to regional conflicts. **Bahrain**: Maintaining its close security alignment with the United States, Bahrain remains the sole Arab nation participating in Operation Prosperity Guardian. This involvement underscores its commitment to Gulf stability and countering non-state actors like the Houthis. Bahrain continues to advocate for collective security measures to address the ongoing threats in the Red Sea.

**France**: France has escalated its response to the Red Sea crisis by condemning Houthi attacks and increasing its naval presence in the region. Paris supports a more assertive European Union role in regional security and has been instrumental in launching Operation Aspides, a naval mission aimed at protecting maritime trade and deterring hostile actions.

**Denmark**: Directly affected by Houthi attacks on commercial vessels, Denmark has advocated for increased naval patrols and greater European involvement in Red Sea security. Copenhagen is a key proponent of the European Maritime Awareness Mission in the Strait of Hormuz and has contributed naval assets to support multinational efforts in safeguarding maritime routes.

Japan: Heavily reliant on Red Sea trade routes for energy imports, Japan has condemned Houthi hijackings but continues to prefer diplomatic de-escalation over military action. Tokyo has increased naval coordination with allies to ensure safe passage for its vessels and emphasizes the importance of dialogue to resolve underlying conflicts.

**India**: In response to disruptions in trade routes, India has expanded its naval patrols in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. As an emerging global power, New Delhi emphasizes multilateral cooperation to counter piracy and maritime threats, engaging in joint exercises and intelligence-sharing with regional and international partners.

**South Korea**: South Korea's shipping industry depends on Red Sea stability. While condemning Houthi actions, Seoul has avoided direct military engagement, favoring diplomatic pressure and security dialogues. South Korea collaborates with international coalitions to enhance maritime security and protect its commercial interests.

**Djibouti**: Hosting multiple foreign military bases, Djibouti plays a crucial role in regional security. The government has increased naval patrols to protect its ports and prevent arms smuggling. Djibouti's strategic location at the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait makes it a key player in efforts to stabilize the Red Sea corridor.

**Somalia**: Facing intersecting security challenges, including piracy and arms trafficking, Somalia has been adversely affected by the Red Sea conflict. The instability has exacerbated illegal arms trade near its coastline, complicating national security efforts and undermining regional stability.

**Jordan**: Maintaining diplomatic ties with key regional actors, Jordan supports a political resolution to the Yemen conflict. Amman backs international security efforts in the Red Sea and participates in diplomatic initiatives aimed at de-escalating tensions and promoting regional cooperation.

**Oman**: Oman continues to act as a mediator between the Houthis and Yemen's government, promoting negotiated solutions over military action. Muscat's neutral stance and diplomatic efforts have been pivotal in facilitating dialogue and attempting to broker ceasefires between conflicting parties.

**Sudan**: Already grappling with internal conflict, Sudan has been further destabilized by Red Sea instability. The ongoing crisis has worsened humanitarian conditions, hindering aid deliveries and exacerbating the plight of displaced populations. Khartoum calls for international assistance to address both security and humanitarian challenges arising from the conflict.

**Morocco**: As a North African nation, Morocco has experienced disruptions in trade due to the instability in the Red Sea. The rerouting of shipping vessels around the Cape of Good Hope has led to increased shipping times and costs, affecting Morocco's import and export activities. The Moroccan government advocates for enhanced international naval patrols and diplomatic efforts to restore security in the Red Sea, aiming to stabilize trade routes vital to its economy.

**Netherlands**: The Netherlands, with its significant maritime industry, has been impacted by the Houthi attacks on shipping. Dutch shipping companies have faced increased insurance premiums and operational costs due to the need for longer alternative routes. The Dutch government supports multinational naval operations, such as Operation Prosperity Guardian, and calls for diplomatic initiatives to address the root causes of the conflict, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding international shipping lanes.

**Australia**: As a key ally of the United States and a nation heavily reliant on maritime trade, Australia has been affected by the Red Sea shipping disruptions. Australian exports to Europe and the Middle East have encountered delays and higher transportation costs. The Australian government has expressed support for international efforts to secure maritime routes and has considered deploying naval assets to assist in patrols, emphasizing its commitment to global trade security.

**Belgium**: Belgium's economy, with its strategic ports like Antwerp, has felt the repercussions of the Red Sea crisis. The increased freight rates and extended shipping times have disrupted supply chains. The Belgian government advocates for a coordinated European Union response, combining naval presence with diplomatic engagement to de-escalate tensions and ensure the safety of commercial vessels.

**New Zealand**: While geographically distant, New Zealand's trade has been indirectly impacted by the Red Sea disruptions, especially in terms of increased shipping costs and delays for goods destined for European and Middle Eastern markets. The New Zealand government emphasizes the need for international cooperation to address the security challenges in the Red Sea and supports diplomatic measures aimed at restoring stability in the region.

**Pakistan**: With strategic interests in the region, Pakistan has closely monitored the developments in the Red Sea. The instability has implications for Pakistan's maritime trade routes and energy supplies. The Pakistani government has called for peaceful resolutions to the conflict and has offered to participate in international efforts to secure maritime navigation, highlighting its strategic stake in regional stability.

**Sri Lanka**: As a nation dependent on maritime trade, Sri Lanka has been affected by the disruption of trade routes in the Red Sea. The rerouting of ships has led to increased congestion in alternative routes, impacting Sri Lankan ports. The government advocates for international collaboration to ensure the safety and security of maritime passages, recognizing the importance of stable trade routes for its economy.

**Canada**: An ally of the US and UK, Canada has expressed concern over the Red Sea crisis's impact on global trade and security. Canadian shipping companies have faced increased operational costs due to longer routes. The Canadian government supports multinational efforts to secure maritime routes and emphasizes the need for diplomatic solutions to address the underlying causes of the conflict.

**Ukraine**: While not directly involved in the Red Sea crisis, Ukraine has a vested interest in international maritime security and stability, especially given its own experiences with regional conflicts. The Ukrainian government underscores the importance of upholding international maritime laws and supports global initiatives aimed at ensuring the free and safe passage of vessels worldwide.

**Philippines**: The deaths of Filipino sailors in attacks have raised significant concerns about the safety of international workers. The Philippine government has called for increased protection measures for seafarers and supports international efforts to secure maritime routes. Additionally, they emphasize the need for comprehensive investigations into the incidents to hold perpetrators accountable.

**Vietnam**: Similar to the Philippines, Vietnam has been alarmed by the fatalities of its sailors resulting from the attacks. The Vietnamese government demands stricter security protocols and enhanced international cooperation to protect maritime workers. They also stress the importance of addressing the humanitarian aspects of the crisis, ensuring that affected families receive support and justice.

**Turkey**: As a major regional power with substantial maritime interests and diplomatic ties to key actors in the Red Sea region, Turkey has been proactive in seeking solutions to the crisis. The Turkish government has proposed hosting diplomatic talks between conflicting

parties and has increased its naval patrols to protect its commercial vessels, aiming to balance its strategic interests with regional stability.

**Greece**: Serving as a crucial shipping hub and significant player in maritime trade, Greece has been impacted by the disruptions in the Red Sea. Greek shipping companies have faced increased operational challenges due to longer alternative routes. The Greek government advocates for a unified European response, combining naval operations with diplomatic efforts to restore security in the affected maritime corridors.

**Germany**: As a prominent NATO and EU member, Germany has expressed deep concern over the security threats in the Red Sea and their implications for global trade. The German government supports multinational naval missions to protect shipping lanes and emphasizes the need for diplomatic initiatives to address the root causes of the conflict, highlighting the importance of maintaining international trade stability.

**Brazil**: Representing a major non-aligned perspective from the Global South, Brazil has observed the Red Sea crisis with concern due to its potential impact on global trade dynamics. While not directly affected, the Brazilian government calls for peaceful resolutions through international dialogue and underscores the importance of maintaining open and secure maritime routes for the benefit of all nations.

**South Africa**: As a key player in maritime trade, member of BRICS, and a nation with vested interests in African security, South Africa has been directly impacted by the rerouting of ships around the Cape of Good Hope. This increase in maritime traffic has led to congestion and heightened demands

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