

## International

# 10 Yemeni troops killed as new fighting clouds peace efforts

## Houthis lean more towards the option of military confrontation than current negotiations

**DUBAI:** At least 10 soldiers were killed in renewed fighting in Yemen, military sources told AFP, despite diplomatic efforts to halt the long-running war in the Arab world's poorest country. The clashes took place in oil-producing Marib province, one of the main battlegrounds and the scene of sporadic fighting even during a lull in hostilities over the past year.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels attacked a mountainous area and have been engaged in a build-up of forces in the region, two military sources told AFP. "The Houthis launched an attack on hills overlooking Harib district, south of Marib, and made progress on that front, causing the displacement of dozens of families," one of the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"At least 10 soldiers were killed, in addition to an unknown number of attackers," the source added. The details of the clash were confirmed by a second military official. The fighting comes a month after at least four soldiers were killed in the same district, and dents new optimism after Saudi Arabia and Iran, who back opposing sides in what amounts to a proxy war, agreed to restore diplomatic ties. Analyst Maged Al-Madhaji, commenting on the latest fighting, said "the Houthis are interested in sending a clear political message that ... the Tehran-Riyadh deal does not mean" the rebels will just surrender.

"The Houthis lean more towards the option of a military confrontation than current negotiations,"

said Al-Madhaji, the co-founder of the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies think tank. An exchange of hundreds of prisoners was agreed this week and Hans Grundberg, the UN secretary general's special envoy for Yemen, has said "intense diplomatic efforts" are underway to strike a peace deal.

The Houthis seized control of Yemen's capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led military intervention the following year and fighting that has left hundreds of thousands dead, through direct and indirect causes, and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

But a UN-brokered ceasefire that took effect last April brought a sharp reduction in hostilities and, even though the truce expired in October, fighting has largely remained on hold. On Monday, after talks in Switzerland, the Houthis and Yemen's internationally recognised government agreed to exchange 887 prisoners -- 181 held in Houthi prisons and 706 rebels.

During a Security Council meeting last week, UN officials said the detente between Saudi Arabia and Iran—welcomed by both the Houthis and the Yemeni government—should offer momentum toward peace.

However, it is unlikely to solve all Yemen's problems. The influence of the two regional powers is only one dimension of a complex conflict in a country fractured along confessional, regional and political lines, analysts warn. — AFP



**MARIB:** Yemeni Defence Minister Lieutenant General Mohsen Mohammed Al-Daeri (C) attends a military parade of fighters loyal to the Saudi-backed government during a graduation ceremony of officers and the completion of specialised military courses. — AFP

## Zionist entity missiles hit arms depot in Aleppo

**BEIRUT:** A Zionist missile strike destroyed a suspected arms depot used by Iran-backed militias at Syria's Aleppo airport Wednesday, a war monitor said, with authorities saying the strike put the airport out of service. It was the second such attack in a month on the airport in Syria's second city, which has been a major conduit for relief flights since a February 6 earthquake devastated swathes of northern Syria and neighbouring Turkey.

The pre-dawn strike targeted "the airport compound and a weapons depot belonging to pro-Iranian forces on the airport's perimeter," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights group said. The Britain-based war monitor said the arms depot was "completely destroyed".

The Syrian defence ministry reported "damage" but did not immediately mention any casualties. "Around 3:55 am (0055 GMT), the Zionist enemy carried out an air attack... targeting Aleppo international airport, leading to some material damage," a ministry statement said. "A number of missiles" were fired from the Mediterranean west of the coastal city of Latakia, it added. The transport ministry said the strikes caused damage to the runway and to airport equipment, forcing all flights to be redirected to Damascus or to Latakia on the Mediterranean coast.

The Zionist military rarely comments on individual strikes against Syria, but has vowed repeatedly to keep up its air campaign to stop arch foe Iran consolidating its presence. The Zionist military said Wednesday that "we do not comment on reports in the foreign media", its standard response when questioned about such strikes. Previous strikes blamed on Zionist entity have also stopped flights using the airport following damage to the runway. On March 7, three people were killed in an Zionist strike on the airport that brought air traffic, including relief flights, to a halt. — AFP

## Gaza fisherman tests waters in legal fight over blockade

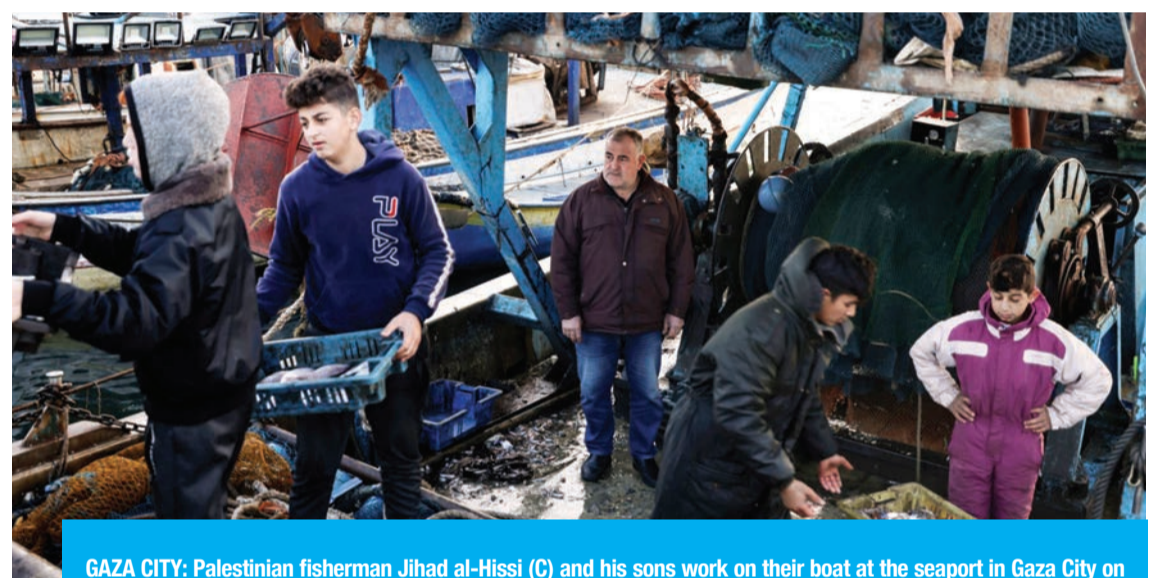
**GAZA CITY:** Gaza fisherman Jihad al-Hissi is used to rough waters but he now faces a new storm. A Zionist entity court may seize his boat after he breached the limits of the enclave's fishing zone. The issue is crucial for thousands in the blockaded Palestinian territory of 2.3 million people, where fishing in the Mediterranean Sea remains one of the few economic lifelines.

Hissi, 55, with square shoulders and a scruffy beard, told his story at Gaza's dock early one morning as fishermen sold their overnight catch of sea bream, prawns and sardines. For now he has his boat, but its fate is uncertain as Zionist authorities argue before a Haifa court that it should be permanently taken away.

The vessel, used to catch gamberi prawns off southern Gaza near Egypt, is named the "Hajj Rajab", but its owners have erased the name from its yellow hull. "I don't want the Zionists to spot us and seize my boat," said Hissi, who had a violent encounter with a Zionist naval patrol boat more than a year ago.

Zionist entity says its land, air and sea blockade of Gaza is needed to protect it from rocket and other attacks from Hamas and to prevent arms smuggling to the Islamist militant movement. Palestinians argue it is an effective siege that has crippled Gaza's economy and further impoverished its people, while the fishing limits deny it crucial protein.

Last year's incident came on February 14 when Hissi's vessel ventured beyond the maritime zone that Zionist entity declared in 2007, the year Hamas seized power in Gaza. Jihad's brother Nihad, who was at sea that day, said that "100 meters beyond the area, we were surprised by three Zionist boats



**GAZA CITY:** Palestinian fisherman Jihad al-Hissi (C) and his sons work on their boat at the seaport in Gaza City on January 10, 2023. - Gaza fisherman Jihad al-Hissi is used to rough waters but he now he faces a new storm. — AFP

with commandos. "They attacked our boat... tied us up and arrested us." The boat's cabin is still damaged from the water cannon blasts and the rubber-encased bullets fired by the Zionist forces that day. Zionist entity, in documents presented to court, accuses Hissi of having "repeatedly violated the security restrictions imposed by the Zionist army in the maritime zone adjacent to Gaza". The Zionist non-government group Gisha has helped defend Hissi and in September secured the boat's return, but Zionist authorities now demand the court "permanently confiscate" the vessel. The fishing zone allowed by Zionist entity currently extends only to the heavily fished areas between six and 15 nautical miles (about 11 to 28 kilometres) off the Gaza coast. Hissi argues this is less than the maximum of 20 nautical miles agreed in the 1990s under the Zionist-Palestinian agreements

in Oslo. But he also admits to going even beyond that from time to time, in search of shrimp which nets around \$21 per kilogram (2.2 pounds) and can make the difference between profit and loss.

The legal fight is closely watched by thousands of fishermen in Gaza. If Hissi's boat is permanently confiscated, this would spell "a serious threat to the thousands of fishermen in Gaza, because it aims to put an end to fishing," charged Nizar Ayyash, president of the union representing the 4,000 fishermen in Gaza.

The court battle comes amid a rise in Zionist's temporary seizures of fishing boats suspected of smuggling or breaching the fishing zone. Last year saw 23 boat confiscations, the highest number since 2018, according to the Palestinian non-governmental group Al Mezan. — AFP

## Breaking fast with dates...

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energy levels. It is common to feel lethargic after fasting. Eating one to three or more dates before anything else to break your fast, is a sure-fire way to combat the exhaustion you may feel. Within an hour of digesting a date or two or three, your body feels stronger, and the sugar is replenished in the blood, the lack of which is the main cause of hunger and tiredness. Note that Prophet (PBUH) preferred to break his fast on dates in odd numbers.

Additionally, dates help alleviate symptoms of low blood sugar. During a fast, whether during Ramadan or any other time, you can experience low blood sugar which can leave you feeling weak, tired, and lightheaded. Dates are a natural sugar supply that will combat low blood sugar and help you feel better. Headaches are a common result of low blood sugar levels and fasting. Dates can help alleviate headaches.

More benefits of dates: Dates are a great source of fibre. Fibre helps you feel full. When you've spent a long day fasting, your first instinct might be to stuff your stomach once it's time to break the fast. By eating a few dates before you consume anything else, you can satiate your hunger without overeating and causing yourself any discomfort. Dates can help with digestion. You can often experience nausea or an upset stomach in general when you start eating after fasting all day long. Dates are great for digestion. They help ease constipation due to their high fibre content.

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Dates are full of vitamins and nutrients. It is no wonder why dates are a significant part of Middle Eastern culture. They are jam-packed with essential vitamins and nutrients. Dates contain more potassium than a banana, and magnesium, iron, copper, phosphorus, and calcium. In conclusion: fasting during the month of Ramadan is a spiritual tradition to bring you closer to the Almighty and your community, especially when you enjoy a communal meal while breaking the fast, and to empathize with the poor and the needy.

Following the tradition of consuming dates upon breaking the fast allows one to feel closer to Almighty Allah, Prophet (PBUH) and the entire community, which is a sacred experience for Muslims. All these points as well as others underscore the Message that Almighty Allah delivered to us in Surat (chapter) Fussilat 41, verse 53 that can be translated as: "Soon shall We show them Our Signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that (the Quran) is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a witness over everything?" (Fussilat 41: 53)

*Courtesy of the TIES Center: The TIES Center is one of the projects of Kuwait Society for Cultural Dialogue, and is the social and educational hub for English speaking expats in Kuwait and aims at empowering Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society. It also facilitates opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel: 25231015/6; Hotline: 94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net*

He added that there are plans to develop the Islamic Arts Center and to set up a third exhibition for the Prophet's (PBUH) biography, and that for 30 years the Grand Mosque administration successfully achieved and organized charitable events and activities for nine million benefactors, held night prayers for more than five million worshippers and Eid prayers for more than 300,000 devotees.

In a similar statement to KUNA, Director of Information Department at the Ministry of Awqaf Dr Ahmad Al-Otaibi said that the Grand Mosque's areas of work are numerous and not confined to Ramadan only, including cultural, artistic activities and many others. He praised the role of ministries and state institutions that actively contribute to the organization process as well as the volunteers for their participation in preparing for the blessed nights of Ramadan in the Grand Mosque. The Grand Mosque construction began in 1979 at the initiative of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and opened in 1986. — KUNA

## Humanity lifeblood is under threat...

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water as well as those already strained. Governments and actors in the public and private sectors are invited to present proposals at the conference to reverse that trend and help meet the development goal, set in 2015, of ensuring "access to water and sanitation for all by 2030."

The last conference at this high level on the issue, which lacks a global treaty or a dedicated United Nations agency, was held in 1977 in Mar del Plata, Argentina. "The water crisis is bad enough without climate change," said Stuart Orr of the World Wildlife Fund. "We can build resilient societies and economies if governments and businesses urgently pursue policies, practices and investments that recognize—and restore—the full value of healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands," he said. But some observers have already voiced concerns about the scope of commitments and the availability of funding to implement them.

"About 10 percent of the world's population lives in a country where water stress has reached a high or critical level," the report says. According to the most recent UN climate study, published Monday by the IPCC expert panel, "roughly half of the world's

population currently experience severe water scarcity for at least part of the year." Those shortages have the most significant impact on the poor, Connor told AFP. "No matter where you are, if you are rich enough, you will manage to get water," he said. Women and girls are also "disproportionately affected," actor Matt Damon, co-founder of the nonprofit Water.org, said Wednesday, adding that "millions of girls aren't in school because of this, because they're collecting water." The report noted the impact of existing water supplies becoming contaminated due to underperforming or non-existent sanitation systems.

"At least 2 billion people (globally) use a drinking water source contaminated with feces, putting them at risk of contracting cholera, dysentery, typhoid and polio," it said. That high number does not take into account pollution from pharmaceuticals, chemicals, pesticides, microplastics and nanomaterials. To ensure access to safe drinking water for all by 2030, levels of investment would have to be tripled, the report said.

Freshwater ecosystems—which in addition to water, provide life-sustaining economic resources and help combat global warming—"are among the most threatened in the world," the report warned. "Everything we need to live a decent life is directly related to water: our health, food safety, habitats, economy, infrastructure and climate," said Dutch King Willem-Alexander, who is summit co-chair alongside the president of Tajikistan. — AFP

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val it was "able to access and process information from the real world through Google Search and keep my response consistent with search results." The bot also underlined that it was still "under development, while ChatGPT has been released to the public. This means that I am constantly learning and improving, while ChatGPT is likely to remain relatively unchanged." OpenAI recently released a long-awaited update of its AI technology that it said would be safer and more accurate than its predecessor.

## Google launches ChatGPT rival in...

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"We've learned a lot so far by testing Bard, and the next critical step in improving it is to get feedback from more people," Google vice presidents Sissie Hsiao and Eli Collins said in a blog post. As exciting as chatbots can be, they have their faults, Hsiao and Collins cautioned. Google has so far proceeded more carefully in its rollout of generative AI to consumers, in contrast to Microsoft's choice to swiftly make the products available despite reports of problems. ChatGPT's OpenAI is backed by Microsoft, which earlier this year said it would fund the research company to the tune of billions of dollars.

Asked by AFP how its product was different from ChatGPT, Bard said that unlike its Microsoft-backed ri-

## Grand Mosque opens its doors...

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culture among various segments of the society, through seminars, lectures, conferences and cultural forums. Within the Grand Mosque preparations for the holy month of Ramadan, a complete Tarawih prayers schedule of 10 reciters have been set, added Al-Enezi, noting that there will be a lot of activities and events during Ramadan, such as Quran memorizing competitions, preparing Ramadan banquets and many other activities. Director of the Grand Mosque Administration Ali Shaddad told KUNA that they are eager to serve worshippers, especially in Ramadan after the suspension of night prayer for three years due to COVID-19 and the maintenance works in the mosque.