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## Yemen's Blockade Bankrupts Israel's Port of Eilat

The CEO of the Port of Eilat, who has been vocal about its dire economic condition for months, is now appealing for financial support from the Israeli government, Robert Inlakesh reports.



The Port of Eilat on the Red Sea in 2008. (Adiel lo, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Despite the formation of a multinational naval coalition led by the United States, the Israeli-controlled Port of Eilat has reportedly gone bankrupt and is seeking a government bailout. The situation underscores the failure of U.S.-led efforts against Yemen's Ansar Allah — known pejoratively as the Houthis — blockade in the Red Sea, enforced until Israel ends its war on Gaza.

“It must be acknowledged that the port is in a state of bankruptcy,” said Gideon Golber, CEO of the Port of Eilat, who has been vocal about the port's dire economic condition for months

and is now appealing for financial support from the Israeli government. Speaking to the Knesset's Economic Affairs Committee on July 7, Golber noted that economic activity ceased following Ansar Allah's Red Sea blockade.

On Nov. 19, 2023, Yemen's Ansar Allah seized the Israeli-linked shipping vessel "Galaxy Leader" off the coast of Hodeidah, declaring the operation an act of solidarity with Gaza. Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, subsequently announced that no Israeli-linked ships would be allowed passage through the Red Sea.



Car-carrier Galaxy Leader in 2006. (Garitzko, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain)

Although Ansar Allah began firing missiles and drones at Israel on Oct.19, 2023, the comprehensive blockade in the Red Sea to prevent ships from reaching the Israeli-operated Port of Eilat wasn't fully enforced until late November.

In December, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced that the U.S. would lead a multinational naval coalition named Operation Prosperity Guardian to ensure the free passage of ships to Eilat [Israel's southern-most city at the northern tip of the Red Sea].

Within the first month of the blockade, economic activity at the Port of Eilat dropped by 85 percent, Golber told Reuters in December. Despite efforts from the U.S. and U.K. navies to combat the blockade, they remained confident they could restore the flow of ships to Israel.



Map of the Red Sea and bordering countries. (Derived from BlankMap-World6.svg, Canuckguy et al. Wikimedia Commons, Public domain)

However, after continued defeats inflicted by Ansar Allah, which prevented ships from passing through waters defended by the U.S.-led coalition, another military operation, “Operation Poseidon Archer,” was announced. This operation aimed to destroy Yemeni military infrastructure but failed to locate critical targets. Following a large-scale Yemeni attack on American vessels on Jan. 10, periodic airstrikes and retaliatory attacks on ships continued.

In June, the CEO of the Port of Eilat declared, “There has been no work at all for seven months.” He attributed this to the coalition’s weakness in dealing with Ansar Allah:

“This issue cannot be neglected despite the war. But there are no solutions, so I am not ashamed to tell clients to pay the Houthis \$100,000 to cross, and I will participate in the financing. I don’t sleep at night, and if you have to pay the Egyptians to go through the Suez Canal, or the Houthis to go through Bab al Mandab, then that’s what’s needed.”



Maps showing the Bab-el-Mand Strait between Yemen and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa. (Skilla1st, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0)

A month earlier, the Port of Eilat faced criticism for threatening to fire half of its approximately 120 workers. This move drew condemnation from Israel’s top labor union, the Histadrut, and even involved the Israeli Knesset.

While the economic collapse of the Port of Eilat has been unfolding over the past eight months, it has been covered in Israeli Hebrew media but received little attention in Western media. This is likely due to the stunning military failure of Operation Prosperity Guardian,

which drained significant resources and U.S. taxpayer funds in an embarrassing and ultimately failed attempt to save an Israeli port.

**Robert Inlakesh is a political analyst, journalist and documentary filmmaker currently based in London. He has reported from and lived in the occupied Palestinian territories and hosts the show “Palestine Files.” Director of “Steal of the Century: Trump’s Palestine-Israel Catastrophe.” Follow him on Twitter @falasteen47**

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