

Abdulmahdi in Yemen: An Emerging Militia Godfather

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Mar 28, 2025

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Brief Analysis

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A former Iraqi prime minister is using his freedom from U.S. sanctions to act as an envoy between designated terrorist groups.

On March 19, former Iraqi prime minister Adil Abdulmahdi arrived in Sanaa, where he was received by Houthi minister of transport Muhammad Ayyash Qahim (Figure 1). The officially announced purpose of his visit was to attend an international conference on "Palestine: The Central Issue of the Umma." Yet given his growing political role on behalf of the Iran-backed, U.S.-designated terrorist group [Kataib Hezbollah \(/node/16641\)](/node/16641), the Yemen trip could reflect increasing cooperation between Iraqi *muqawama* (resistance) groups and the Houthis.



Figure 1: Abdulmahdi is accompanied by Houthi officials en route to meet the minister of transport, March 19, 2025.

Abdulmahdi has been notably active in recent months. Since December, he has publicly met with Iraqi president Abdul Latif Rashid, Supreme Judicial Council head Faeq Zaidan, Iraqi prime minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, and Lebanese parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri.

During his Sanaa trip, he met with the prime minister of the Houthi-led government, Ahmed Ghaleb al-Rahawi (Figure 2). Abdulmahdi was also among the foreign



Figure 2: Abdulmahdi is received by the prime minister of the Houthi-led government, March 21, 2025.

conference guests received by Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree (Figure 3). And during an interview with [Al-Ahd TV \(/node/17268\)](/node/17268), a network run by the militia [Asaib Ahl al-Haq \(/node/16715\)](/node/16715), Abdulmahdi stated that he had met with Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, head of the movement's Supreme Revolutionary Committee, along with several ministers (Figure 4). In response to a question about the purpose of his visit, he replied, "[This is about] the project of solidarity among our peoples and states—how can we unify our efforts."

On March 22, Abdulmahdi delivered a speech at the conference (Figure 5). Given his growing role as a political actor on behalf of Iraqi militias, particularly Kataib Hezbollah, his narrative warrants close attention. Below are his key points:

- **The Houthis' regional role:**



Figure 3: Abdulmahdi among other foreign guests received by Yahya Saree, March 23, 2025.

Since the Gaza war began in October 2023, the Houthis have introduced a new strategy of "deterrence resistance," moving beyond traditional defensive tactics.



Figure 4: Abdulmahdi interviewed by al-Ahd TV in Sanaa, broadcast March 25, 2025.

- **Axis of resistance:** The worldwide Muslim *umma* is mobilizing through an

expanding "axis of resistance," with the Houthis playing a leading role in order to compensate for battlefield losses suffered by other axis members.

- **Red Sea front:** U.S., British, and allied naval deployments have failed to stop Houthi disruption of shipping to Israeli ports.
- **Unified retaliation:** The new era of "resistance" means resorting to collective retaliation when any one axis member is harmed, and ensuring that regrouping fronts return stronger.
- **Breaking the siege:** Houthi military actions challenge the siege on Gaza and inspire broader support for the Palestinian cause.
- **Zionist decline:** Zionist ideology is supported by "Zionized" Christians, Arabs, and Muslims. Yet the "Zionist dream" is now unraveling, with Israel increasingly isolated even by its allies.
- **Strategic unity:** Maintaining unity among "resistance" fronts can counter the regional legacy of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and global "Zionist-colonial alliances."
- **Global shifts:** The BRICS countries may not be focused on Palestine, but they contribute to the "broader struggle" through their global impact.
- **End of unipolarity:** China's rise and the failure to contain Russia signal the breakdown of U.S.-led unipolar hegemony.



Figure 5: Abdulmahdi delivers his speech at the conference, "Palestine: The Central Issue of the Umma," March 22, 2025.

Abdulmahdi's engagement with senior Houthi officials, participation in a symbolically significant gathering for Iran-aligned groups, and delivery of a highly charged speech against Israel, the United States, and their allies all underscore his evolving role as a political emissary and civilian face for U.S.-designated terrorist organizations in Iraq, particularly Kataib Hezbollah. Rather than operating solely within Iraq's formal political framework, he appears to be positioning himself as a regional actor by amplifying the messaging, strategic goals, and ideological narratives of the Iran-led "axis of resistance." This reflects growing coordination and collaboration between the Houthis and Iraqi militias across multiple fronts, including military cooperation, weapons transfers, and political alignment. ❖

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