



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

Netanyahu will visit Washington with a sense of relief and to confirm his policy



Israel has dealt the Yemeni Houthis a heavy blow by bombing the port of Hodeidah on the Red Sea, their most important oil depot and gateway for arms shipments from Iran.

This was Israel's "enough-is-enough" response after up to 200 Houthi attacks on Israeli territory, marking its first military response to the Houthis since the conflict in Gaza started at a distance of more than 1,100 miles.

"The Houthis attacked us over 200 times. The first time that they harmed an Israeli citizen, we struck them. And we will do this in any place where it may be required," said Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, clearly announcing that Israel's military response to Houthi attacks will not end here.

Israel's harsh retaliatory strike against the Houthis suggests that careful political calculation preceded it.

Benjamin Netanyahu's government, under pressure from internal unrest to end the operation in Gaza and return the hostages kidnapped on October 7, could not ignore the Houthis' attack on Tel Aviv without an appropriate military response.

The speed with which Israel reacted to the Houthi attack on Tel Aviv will undoubtedly strengthen Netanyahu's reputation at home. But at the same time, it will divert some of the domestic public's attention from Gaza to the confrontation with pro-Iranian extremists in Yemen.

And perhaps most importantly for the Israeli Prime Minister, the fierce action on the Houthis' vital infrastructure is his key political asset, with which he is now travelling to Washington.

An opportunity for a turning point

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Netanyahu will address both houses of the US Congress for the fourth time, making him the record holder

among world leaders. This could be a turning point in the significantly cooled relations with his closest ally, and he is undoubtedly preparing for it.

After all, the heavy bombing of the Houthis' infrastructure in Yemen is a combative introduction to the political talks that the Israeli prime minister is hoping will be very successful.

What he received before his arrival in Washington is confirmation that he is still an acceptable partner for the US, something his opponents at home already had doubts about.

Netanyahu will receive a first-class reception in Washington

In this respect, Netanyahu will receive a first-class reception in Washington. Despite criticism he might get from the administration or Democrats in Congress, his mission has gained significant ground before it even began.

The circumstances in the United States favour the Israeli prime minister's mission. The uncertainty surrounding Joe Biden's candidacy, as well as the rise of the Republicans following the assassination attempt on Donald Trump, have shifted the focus from American opposition to his continued operation in Gaza and the increasing suffering among the civilian population.

The domestic political turmoil is forcing both sides of American politics to pause for a moment and focus on the arrival of the Israeli Prime Minister as the world's number one ally visits.

"There are a number of Democrats in the House who have said they're going to boycott that event. Some others may protest. If anybody gets out of hand... We're going to arrest people if we have to do it," said the House Speaker, Republican Mike Johnson, ahead of Netanyahu's visit to the US Congress.

The influence of the campaign on Netanyahu's visit

An important intergovernmental visit is also a critical campaign event. That is why Mike Johnson issued this warning at a Republican Jewish Coalition event on the side-lines of the recent Republican convention.

The action against the Houthis in Yemen is also a pretext for an important political goal that Netanyahu wants to achieve in Washington.

"Netanyahu will endeavour to shift the conversation away from the conflict in Gaza toward the threat that Iran and its proxies pose not just to Israel, but also to the United States. This is critically important for Netanyahu and Israel as the Israel Defence Forces intends to wind down major operations in Gaza and turn its attention to southern Lebanon, home to the Iran-backed Hezbollah," Middle East expert Steven A. Cook **told** the Council on Foreign Relations.

Joe Biden's administration will not have much room to manoeuvre to resist the dynamic Netanyahu is seeking

Despite the time and significant efforts Joe Biden's administration has put in to calm the Israeli operation in Gaza, it will not have much room to manoeuvre to resist the dynamic Netanyahu is seeking.

The odds ahead of the elections, and especially the deep leadership crisis that exists within the Democratic ranks, simply do not give them room to escalate the conflict with Netanyahu.

Relief about the government's future

Mike Johnson has been vigorously encouraging the Republicans' enthusiasm for the Israeli prime minister's policies, first by inviting

Netanyahu to give a speech in the US Congress, and then by warning that any protest in the guest's presence will even face sanctions.



Playing the pro-Israel, and even more so, the pro-Netanyahu card, seems to be a major focus of the Republican campaign ahead of the elections - Mike Johnson

Playing the pro-Israel, and even more so, the pro-Netanyahu card, seems to be a major focus of the Republican campaign ahead of the elections, especially as a counterweight to the strained relations the White House has long had with the Israeli government.

If Netanyahu really does ask for more support for dealing with Hezbollah at the talks in Washington, it will be another knock on the open door for Republicans, given the decidedly anti-Iranian sentiment of their presidential candidate, Trump.

Netanyahu will be in Washington next week, relieved of the heavy burden of his government's survival, at least until the US presidential election.

It is now certain that Netanyahu will live to see the November US elections in office, even though he could not have expected it a few months or even weeks ago.