

## US Formally Launches Red Sea Military Operation

The US has formally announced the launch of a new military operation in the Red Sea aimed at responding to attacks on commercial shipping by Yemen's Houthis that started in response to the Jewish entity's assault on Gaza. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced the initiative, dubbed Operation Prosperity Guardian, while on a trip to the region and said the other countries taking part include the UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain. The Houthi attacks have forced some of the world's largest shipping lines to suspend Red Sea transits, which risks a major impact on the global economy. The Houthis, formally known as Ansar Allah, have vowed to target all ships heading to and from 'Israel' and said the only way to "restore calm" to the region is through a lasting ceasefire in Gaza. The Houthis have shown no sign of backing down and announced on Monday that they launched two drone attacks on commercial vessels. Bloomberg reported that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are split on how the US should respond. The UAE wants military action and for the US to redesignate the Houthis as a "foreign terrorist organization," which would make the implementation of a Yemen peace deal impossible.

## President el-Sisi Declared Victorious in Egypt Election

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has secured a third term as leader of the Middle East's most populous nation after the counting of votes in the election held between December 10 and 12 was finalised. Sisi won 89.6 percent of the vote, the National Elections Authority said. Despite Egypt's afflictions, a decade-long crackdown on dissent has eliminated any serious opposition to Sisi. Sisi was running against three other candidates, none of whom were high profile. The most prominent potential candidate ended his run complaining that his campaign had been impeded and dozens of his supporters arrested. Sisi extended the presidential mandate from four to six years and amended the constitution to raise the limit on consecutive terms in office from two to three. Under his rule, Egypt has jailed thousands of political prisoners, and while a presidential pardons committee has freed about 1,000 in one year, rights groups say that three to four times that many were arrested over the same period.