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Gaza truce talks spur hope for resumption of Red Sea shipping

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X.com (video capture)

The head of shipping's top lobby group has welcomed the "positive developments" witnessed in Qatar in recent days where ceasefire talks are underway between Israel and Hamas.

Details are emerging of a potential ceasefire between Israel and Hamas after more than 400 days of war, a development that could usher in the end of the Red Sea shipping crisis, which has seen a huge swathe of the global merchant fleet avoid transits through the Middle East, propping up rates for the past year.

US president Joe Biden has said a deal is "on the brink" of coming to fruition, with Hamas and Israeli officials conducting indirect talks led by Qatar today.

Under the terms of the deal being discussed, Hamas would release three hostages on the first day of the agreement, after which Israel would begin withdrawing the troops from populated areas. Further phases of the ceasefire see greater de-escalation between the two enemies who have been at war since October 2023.

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In support of Hamas, the Houthis from Yemen initiated a campaign against merchant ships passing through the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, targeting more than 100 ships since November 2023, leading to a major rerouting for most ships heading between Asia and Europe. The Houthis have repeatedly stated their campaign will continue until Israeli forces leave Gaza.

Speaking with *Splash*, Guy Platten, the secretary-general of the International Chamber of Shipping, said: "It is clearly positive if Israel and Hamas are moving towards agreeing a ceasefire. However, shipping needs to maintain its watch until any final agreement is reached and verified. We also need to monitor closely the response from the Houthis."

Platten also reminded *Splash* readers that the seafarers from the *Galaxy Leader* are not forgotten and are released as part of any sustained ceasefire and deal. The *Galaxy Leader*, a car carrier, and its crew were hijacked by the Houthis 14 months ago.

There has been no confirmed ship strikes by the Houthis in 2025 so far, with the militant group focusing its attacks on Israel directly with drones and missiles. Houthi military installations have come in for increased aerial attacks in recent weeks from Israeli, US and UK planes.

"A ceasefire with the Houthis is crucial to make the Red Sea navigable again," commented Punit Oza, a well-known commentator on geopolitics and shipping.

"If the Houthis do make a truce, then rates will definitely take a downward dip as the Suez and the Red Sea will be back in business, but that confidence to return may still take weeks," said Oza, who runs Singapore-based consultancy Maritime NXT.

Peter Sand, chief shipping analyst at Xeneta, a container rates platform, said he was still not optimistic that the ongoing talks in Qatar between the two warring factions would lead to the Houthis reining in their attacks as they remain well supplied from Iran.

"I would assess that a ceasefire isn't enough to reopen the Bab al-Mandeb Strait for safe passage. A long-term safe return would still require a solution to the shoreside problems with the Houthi strongholds in and around Yemen," Sand told *Splash*.