

More big shipping firms stop Red Sea routes after attacks

The world's largest shipping group, Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), has announced it is diverting its ships away from the Red Sea because of an increased threat of attacks.

French company CMA CGM took a similar step a day after Danish shipping giant Maersk and German transport company Hapag-Lloyd suspended Red Sea journeys. The decision comes after attacks by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

They say they are targeting ships travelling to Israel.

The Houthis have declared their support for Hamas after Israel launched a military campaign in Gaza following the 7 October Hamas attacks that killed 1,200 people and saw 240 more taken hostage.

Since then, Israel has killed more than 18,000 Palestinians in Gaza, Hamas health officials say.

The Red Sea is one the world's most important routes for oil and fuel shipments.

But the Houthis have been stepping up their attacks, using drones and rockets against foreign-owned vessels.

They have also been firing drones and missiles towards Israel. The US said on Saturday its guided-missile destroyers had shot down 14 Houthi drones in the Red Sea.

In its announcement, MSC said the situation in the area had become "serious".

It said that its container ship MSC PALATIUM III was attacked on Friday as it was transiting the Red Sea. There were no injuries to the crew, but the ship had been taken out of service.

Its ships were being re-routed via the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa.