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Year of fear: 2024 has already seen a wave of violent attacks across the Middle East.

Could America be drawn in? A series of violent events have taken place across the Middle East since the new year began. Some worry about the chance of a bigger war.

What's happening?

It has been an unhappy New Year in the **Middle East**. The war between **Israel** and **Hamas** is still happening. And other countries risk being dragged in.

On Wednesday, two bombs killed dozens of people in **Iran** at a **memorial service** for a general.

On Tuesday night, deputy Hamas chief Saleh al-Arouri was killed in an Israeli drone strike in **Lebanon**. He was in land controlled by a group called **Hezbollah**, which supports Hamas.

And in the **Red Sea**, **Yemen's Houthi** rebels have fired missiles at **cargo ships**.

Find out more

World leaders fear that there could be more violence in the Middle East. The **conflict** between Hezbollah in Lebanon and Israel could grow. The USA could go into battle with the Houthis. And any single sudden event could spark different groups to join in.

But there are also many reasons why armed groups and countries might want to **avoid** a bigger war. If there is war in the Red Sea, it could shut the **Suez Canal**, which might lead to shortages worldwide. If people in Lebanon suffer due to war, Hezbollah may lose some of its power. And although Iran supports Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, it may hold back if it thinks war will cost the country too much.

Could America be drawn in?

Some say

Yes! America does not want to be drawn in, but if its soldiers in the Middle East are attacked, some say they will have no choice.

No! Nobody wants a larger war in the Middle East. It would not really be good for any group or country. Over time, the chance of war will get smaller and smaller.

Others think

Some people say

"War does not determine who is right – only who is left."

Bertrand Russell (1872 – 1970), British philosopher and historian of philosophy

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Are you worried about the conflict in the Middle East?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Why did conflict break out in Gaza?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Imagine you could speak to world leaders about the conflict. What would you say to them?

5. Express

What do others believe? - In pairs, discuss how you think the current conflict might end.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Design a poster calling for peace.

Glossary

Middle East - The lands around the east of the Mediterranean Sea and Arabia.

Israel - A country in the Middle East, and the only Jewish nation in the modern period. It is seen by Jews, Christians and Muslims as the Holy Land.

Hamas - A militant Palestinian organisation, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007. It is listed as a terrorist organisation in the UK.

Iran - A country in Western Asia, officially called the Islamic Republic of Iran. It has a population of 84 million.

Memorial service - A service to remember the life of somebody who has died.

Lebanon - A small country on the eastern Mediterranean coast that has been in the grip of an economic crisis for over a year. It has a native population of just 4.7 million, but migrants and refugees have brought its total population up to almost 7 million.

Hezbollah - A militant organisation based in Lebanon, classified in the UK as a terrorist group. It has made direct attacks on Israel and is believed to have been responsible for assassinating Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

Red Sea - A seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean. To its right is Saudi Arabia, to its left the coast of north Africa.

Yemen - The poorest country in the Gulf region is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis.

Houthi - The Houthis represent a Shia Muslim minority, but have won support from other Yemenis dissatisfied with the government.

Cargo - Goods that are being transported.

Conflict - A state of disagreement when there is a difference of interests, values or goals.

Avoid - Keep away from something.

Suez Canal - An artificial channel that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the the Red Sea. It is a key trade route for goods between Europe and Asia.