

Flotilla Facts-Summer 2011

Flotilla Violates International Law, Intends To Provoke Violent Confrontation

Last year, anti-Israel extremists and Turkish jihadists organized a flotilla to violate Israel's naval blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza. The Israeli Navy redirected five of the boats to the Israeli port of Ashdod without incident. However, those on the sixth boat refused to cooperate. When Israeli officers boarded the ship, the Turkish jihadists brutally attacked them with knives, metal bars, and guns. Nine jihadists were killed.

This year, the same anti-Israel extremists are planning another international flotilla battalion. They plan to set sail at the end of June with an estimated 10 to 15 ships with 1,000 to 4,000 passengers from 32 countries, purportedly to bring humanitarian goods to Gaza.

International leaders, from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the EU, have urged the organizers to cancel the flotilla. (You can read some of their comments below.)

Nine basic facts about the flotilla:

- 1. The flotilla organizers blatantly violate international law by trying to breach a legal maritime blockade.** According to international and customary law, Israel has the legal right to impose a land and naval blockade on Hamas-controlled Gaza. Hamas is openly dedicated to Israel's destruction, has been in an ongoing state of armed conflict against Israel, and has fired over 10,000 rockets into Israeli civilian centers. Israel has the legal right and responsibility to protect its citizens by inspecting goods entering Gaza to prevent weapons from reaching Hamas.
- 2. The flotilla organizers intend to aid and support Hamas, which is designated a terrorist organization by members of the international community,** including the U.S., Canada, Israel, the EU, Japan, and Jordan. Hamas' founding document calls for the murder of Jews, the "obliteration" of Israel, and Israel's replacement with an Islamist theocracy.
- 3. The flotilla organizers are trying to provoke a violent confrontation.** If they were sincerely concerned about humanitarian aid for Gazans, they would deliver it through official Israeli entry points. Israel has repeatedly offered to deliver goods after officially inspecting them for weapons. The organizers have refused to comply. Instead, they hope their provocative, hostile breach of the blockade will compel Israel to use force and make Israel look like an aggressor.
- 4. Gazans are not facing a humanitarian emergency that justifies breaching the blockade.** Humanitarian and consumer goods enter Gaza on a daily basis. UN officials repeatedly confirm that there is an ample supply of food and consumer goods. Israel only limits the entry of dual-purpose goods that could be used for weapons. International statistics indicate that Gazans have a higher standard of living than people in nearly all of Africa, including South Africa, as well as parts of Asia and the Middle East. In fact, Gaza faces a glut of goods, not a shortage of goods, according to recent press reports.

- 5. Hamas, not Israel, has caused the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza.** Hamas has chosen war against Israel instead of peaceful coexistence. It has imposed a repressive, dictatorial, fundamentalist regime on Gaza residents and has murdered its political rivals.
- 6. Flotilla organizers claim to be “nonviolent peace activists” and “human rights activists.” They are not.** They are members of extremist organizations that support terrorist groups and are dedicated to the destruction of Israel. The Free Gaza Movement is an affiliate of the International Solidarity Movement, which opposes the existence of the Jewish state. The IHH (Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation) is a Turkish Islamist organization with links to jihadist organizations in Bosnia, Syria, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere.
- 7. If flotilla organizers really were peace and human rights activists, they would not go to Gaza but to Libya or Syria,** where the brutal Assad regime has arrested, tortured, and murdered thousands of nonviolent, freedom-seeking demonstrators and has caused thousands of others to become refugees.
- 8. The flotilla organizers are violating, not upholding, one of the most fundamental human rights—a nation’s right and responsibility to protect itself** from enemies bent on murdering its citizens and destroying its state.

“As a country, we will never tolerate our security being threatened, nor stand idly by when our people have been killed. We will be relentless in defense of our citizens.” —*U.S. President Barack Obama, May 1, 2011*

9. International leaders oppose the flotilla.

U.S.: “[G]roups and individuals who seek to break Israel’s maritime blockade of Gaza are taking irresponsible and provocative actions. ... We want to just reiterate that there are established and efficient mechanisms for getting humanitarian assistance through to Gaza.” —*U.S. State Department Spokesman Mark Toner, June 1, 2011*

UN: “The secretary-general called on all governments concerned to use their influence to discourage such flotillas, which carry the potential to escalate into violent conflict.” —*Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, May 27, 2011*

Canada: “Unauthorized efforts to deliver aid are provocative and, ultimately, unhelpful to the people of Gaza. Canada recognizes Israel’s legitimate security concerns and its right to protect itself and its residents from attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups, including by preventing the smuggling of weapons.”
— *Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird, May 28, 2011*

France: “[T]he boarding of any naval vessels which are known to have the intention of breaking the naval blockade imposed on Gaza is strongly discouraged, given the security risks associated with such an undertaking.” —*Official Statement*

EU: “I don’t consider a flotilla to be the right response.” —*Catherine Ashton, EU High Commissioner for Foreign Policy*

Turkey: “We are reconsidering our plans [about participating in the flotilla]. ... From our point of view, the developments in neighboring Syria are critically important.” —*IHH Board Member Hüseyin Oruç, June 14,*

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