

## Overview

1. This report describes the fighting waged by IHH operatives and their accomplices against IDF soldiers aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. The descriptions are based on testimonies given by IDF officers and soldiers who participated in the takeover of the ship (names withheld by the IDF).

2. The testimonies corroborate the vast amounts of information gathered by the ITIC since the takeover of the *Mavi Marmara* (some of which, including visual material, was used in this report to complete or illustrate the IDF soldiers' testimonies). The information includes photographs and videos taken aboard the *Mavi Marmara* by the IDF as well as journalists who accompanied the flotilla and foreign media; documents seized aboard the ship; statements made by passengers; descriptions in *The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara*, the book about the flotilla written by Turkish journalist Şefik Dinç published in Turkey; and information appearing in the Turkish and Western media (including the BBC's "Panorama").

3. The testimonies of the IDF soldiers, supported by ITIC information, unequivocally refute the false, biased claims made by the operatives aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, claims which were used in the report criticizing Israel lodged with the fact-finding mission sent by the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The main conclusions drawn from the testimonies are the following:

1) The IDF force which took over the *Mavi Marmara* was faced with organized resistance from scores of operatives (IHH operatives and their accomplices). They were highly motivated and armed with knives, clubs, axes, iron chains, etc. They had been equipped with bulletproof vests, gas masks, pepper spray, headlamps and walkie-talkies. Their mode of deployment and modus operandi indicate that at least some of them had military skills (early briefing, centralized direction, assignment to fighting stations, professional knowhow for operating military equipment and weapons, combat tactics, etc.).

2) The claims that guns were fired from the IDF helicopter at the deck of the *Mavi Marmara*, that the IDF forces fired their weapons indiscriminately, and that they shot at passengers point-blank are false. At no time did the soldiers shoot from the helicopters, and the helicopters were not equipped with weapons which could be used to attack the ship. According to testimonies from IDF soldiers and officers, a stun grenade was thrown from the first helicopter to deter the operatives (which might be the source of the claim that the helicopters fired on them).

3) Two IDF soldiers were shot a short time after they landed on the upper deck, one in the stomach, the other in the knee. According to the soldiers' testimonies, they were shot at during the fighting. In some instances, the shots were

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fired from weapons snatched from IDF soldiers. The bullet wounds and testimonies of the soldiers completely contradict the Human Rights Council's report, which denies the fact that IDF soldiers were shot.

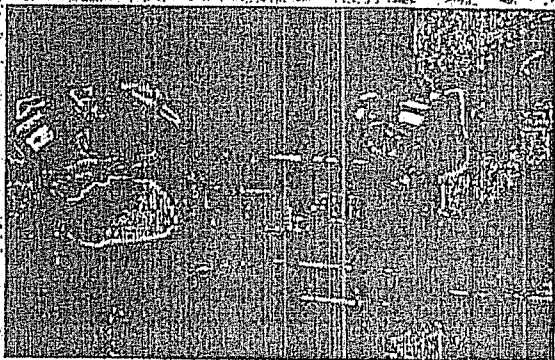
4) During the first stages of the fighting three IDF soldiers were taken hostage, wounded and moved below decks. During their capture and confinement, despite their serious wounds they were brutally beaten with wooden clubs, stabbed and choked, genuine threats to their lives. Despite their appeals they received no medical attention. They were apparently saved by the presence of passengers not involved in the fighting and correspondents with cameras who documented their beatings, deterring their captors from killing them. Eventually, the soldiers were released when the captain used the PA system to announce that the ship was under IDF control.

5) The IDF soldiers behaved humanely toward the passengers after the operatives' resistance had been neutralized. They tied the hands of operatives who were violent or posed a danger. Passengers whose hands were tied but not dangerous and requested to be liberated were untied. Once the situation was under IDF control, additional passengers who were not dangerous were untied whether or not they requested it. According to the testimonies, including the statement made by a doctor aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, the wounded were treated professionally and with care, even some who refused medical treatment and evacuation to Israel, claiming they wanted to die as shaheeds. Despite the difficult circumstances under which the Israeli medical team worked, not one single wounded operative died.

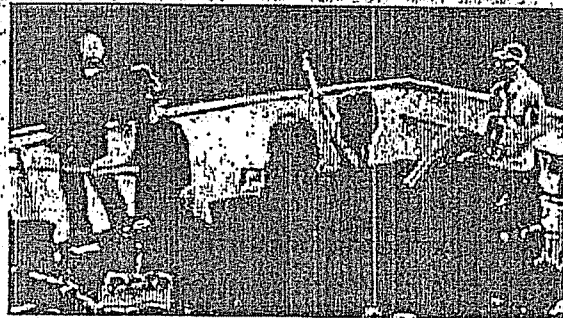
#### Deployment for Battle of IHH Operatives and Their Accomplices

4. Testimonies from the IDF forces indicate that scores of operatives armed with knives, axes, iron chains, clubs and possibly live weapons participated in the fighting (completely contradicting the claims made by IHH leader Bülent Yildirim during the sea voyage that "we do not have so much as a penknife"). According to the testimonies of the IDF soldiers, they found themselves confronted by scores of well-trained operatives who behaved totally differently from the ordinary passengers, who did not take part in the fighting. Those operatives followed an organized, centrally directed plan, were equipped with weapons and other military equipment to harm IDF soldiers and prevent them from boarding the ship at any cost.

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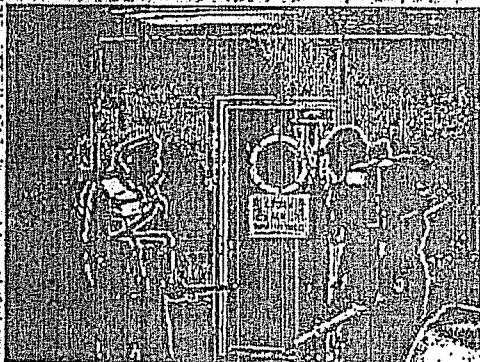


As soon as the soldiers boarded the ship the operatives completed their preparations. They put on bulletproof vests and gas masks and began confronting the soldiers with iron bars and wooden clubs (Picture and caption from Serik Dinc's book)

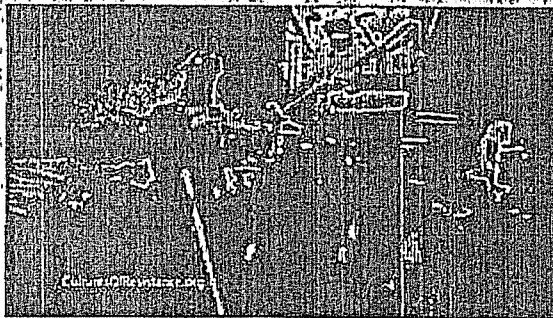


Operatives hold clubs in preparation for a confrontation. In the center rolled-up clubs can be seen, waiting to be unrolled and distributed.

5. According to the testimonies of the IDF soldiers, the operatives who were deployed for battle were wearing bulletproof vests and were equipped with gas masks, pepper spray, headlamps and walkie-talkies. They had printouts of instructions and code words to be used when IDF soldiers boarded the ship.



Operatives armed with improvised clubs made from the ship's railings wait below decks (Photo by Adem Ozkosa for Reuters, May 31, 2010)



An operative holds a club made from the ship's railing (YouTube)

6. According to the testimonies of IDF soldiers who boarded the *Mavi Marmara*, the deployment and tactics used by operatives during the takeover of the ship indicated that they had military qualifications. Indications included pre-confrontation briefings, assignment to fighting positions, analysis of possible points where the IDF might board the *Mavi Marmara* and corresponding deployment. In addition, the fact that operatives approached the helicopters and were not deterred by the stun grenades, the way the operatives remained at the positions to which they had been assigned, the professional knowhow they demonstrated in operating hot and cold weapons and the way they fought during the IDF takeover of the ship also indicated military qualifications.

### **Violent Resistance to the Soldiers' Attempt to Board the Mavi Marmara from the Sea**

7. Before the soldiers began descending from the helicopter, the operatives aboard the *Mavi Marmara* exhibited violent resistance to the attempts of IDF soldiers to board the ship from naval commando boats. They threw objects at the soldiers, including iron bars, crowbars, iron chains, objects of various sizes (metal chairs, trays, glass) and a stun grenade. They also used slings to hurl objects, including pieces of metal and steel balls. To cut through the IDF's climbing equipment they used hand-held disk saws, which had been distributed around the periphery of the upper deck.

8. The violent activity at the ship's railing continued throughout the IDF takeover. Molotov cocktails ready for throwing were found near positions of operatives. During the fighting, when it became clear that the IDF was being attacked with firearms, that there were seriously wounded soldiers and that three were missing, Israeli Navy boats again approached the ship to board additional soldiers. That time as well, violent operatives were organized along the ship's railing to throw objects at the boats, including iron bars, clubs and chains.

9. At that point the naval force identified a number of operatives who approached and used slings to hurl iron balls at them. Some soldiers reported a burst of gunfire targeting the boats.

### **Violence Directed at IDF Soldiers who Descended from the Helicopters**

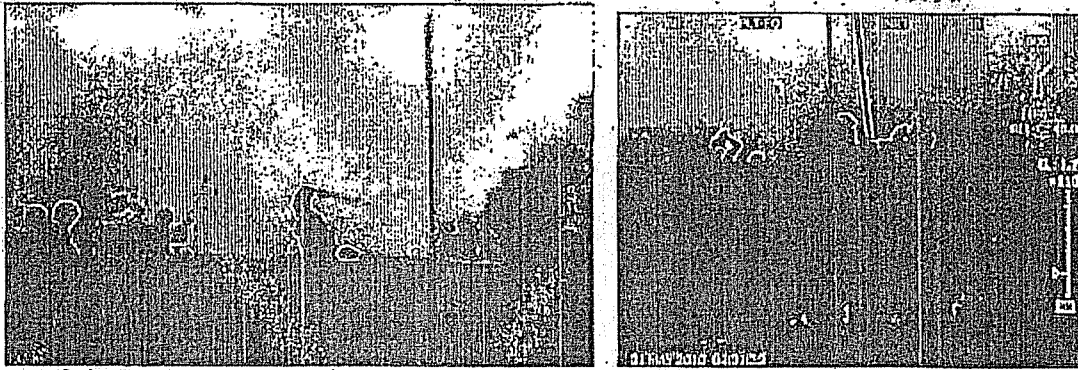
10. According to the testimonies of soldiers who were aboard the three helicopters, at first there were about 15 operatives on the upper deck. As soon as the soldiers descended from the helicopter, they were joined in a coordinated action by scores of other operatives who had been waiting nearby. According to a statement from one of the soldiers, their appearance on deck was directed by one individual.

11. Each IDF soldier was attacked by a team of three or four operatives. They were dragged away from the rope from which they had been lowered from the helicopter as soon as they reached the deck and attacked with both hot and cold weapons (one soldier was stabbed in the stomach and another was shot in the knee). According to the soldiers' testimonies, the first shots were fired a short time after they began descending from the helicopter to the ship.

12. The IDF soldiers who reached the deck were attacked by frenzied teams of operatives carrying deadly cold weapons, including axes, knives, clubs, crowbars, metal objects hurled with slings and other objects (for example, early on one soldier was stabbed in the ear and another was repeatedly beaten and required hospitalization).

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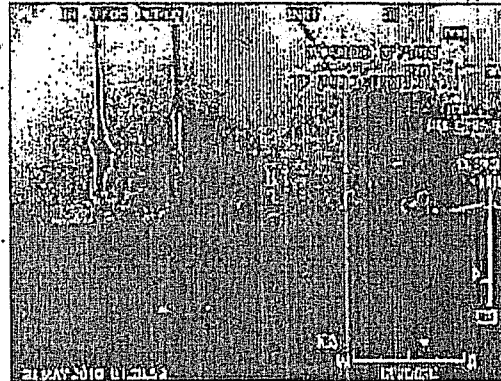
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Above left and right: Operatives beat IDF soldiers as soon as they land on deck. Bottom right: The first soldier off the helicopter is beaten after having been thrown to the lower deck (Photographed by the Israeli Navy).



Operatives on deck wait for the opportunity to beat the IDF soldiers. They are equipped with iron bars and chairs (Photographed by the Israeli Navy)



Operatives on deck wait for the second soldier, having already attacked the first (Photographed by the Israeli Navy).

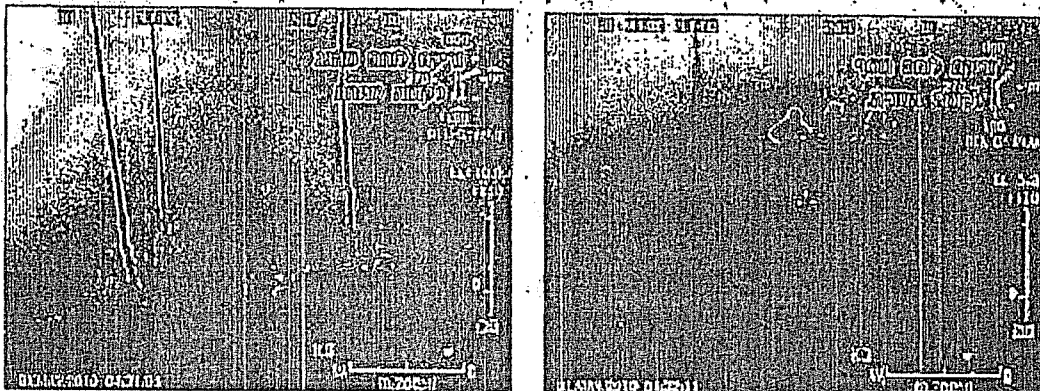
13. According to one of the testimonies, "...The first minutes the battle were hard by any standard. The soldiers were fighting a life and death battle at very close quarters in an extremely limited zone. They were fighting against extremist terrorists who were ready to die, were well equipped with weapons and had had military training. [I say that because] no ordinary civilian knows how to conduct an extended fight at night, wearing a bulletproof vest and a gas mask, how to take a weapon, cock it and shoot it, and not be deterred when someone is fighting against him, unless he has been trained for it and briefed beforehand..."

### Capture of Three Soldiers Who Descended from the First Helicopter

14. The three IDF soldiers on board the first helicopter who were the first to reach the upper deck of the *Mavi Marmara* were brutally attacked by the operatives on deck. Their weapons were taken and they were thrown from the upper to the lower deck. They

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were captured in a pre-meditated, well-coordinated action carried out by a large number of operatives and brought below decks where more operatives were waiting for them.



The soldiers are thrown from the upper to the lower deck by the operatives. Left: The first soldier. Right: Another soldier (Photographs taken by the Israeli Navy).

15. The three soldiers testified that while they were being held below decks a large number of operatives continued the attack, including choking and beating them with iron bars and wooden clubs. That was despite the fact that the hands of two were tied and the third was having convulsions and lost consciousness several times. The three were wounded and bleeding, and in need of medical treatment (one of them had been stabbed in the stomach and was critically wounded).

16. All three testified that during the incident their lives were in danger and they felt the operatives intended to kill them. They added that some of the passengers, those who were below decks, did not participate in the attacks and that there was a more moderate group of passengers who tried to protect them.<sup>1</sup> They also stated that while they were being beaten below decks they were photographed many times.<sup>2</sup>

17. After the IDF forces took over the bridge, the captain used the PA system to inform the passengers that the ship was under IDF control, and that use had been made of firearms [by the IDF]. At that point the three captive soldiers were dragged to the upper deck near the prow. As they were being dragged, the operatives continued beating and choking them. Despite their requests, the captive soldiers received no medical attention. Once above decks two of them escaped by jumping into the sea, and the third remained on deck unconscious and was later rescued by other soldiers.

<sup>1</sup> The testimonies of the soldiers corroborate the description of the events in *The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara* by Turkish journalist Şefik Dinç's, who was aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. He wrote that the intervention of a number of activists prevented the IDF captives from being beaten even more. He said that the doctors among the passengers also tried to prevent the soldiers from being beaten.

<sup>2</sup> Şefik Dinç documented their capture. For the pictures, see the Appendix.

18. According to one of the testimonies, "...The soldiers who were taken below decks were not murdered because of the 450 civilians aboard who were not accomplices to their beating, many of whom had cameras" [the murderous, violent behavior of the operatives took place outside, and the violence inside the ship was relatively slight].

### The Use of Firearms against IDF Soldiers

22. A number of testimonies from officers and soldiers indicate that in several instances the operatives who fought the IDF forces used firearms.

24. The following are testimonies from the two soldiers who were shot:

1) The second soldier to descend from the helicopter and was shot in the stomach said, "...About five terrorists jumped on me and I fought them off, as best I could. I was attacked with clubs, [iron] bars, metal chairs and fists. They choked me and tried to throw me into the sea from the starboard side of the *Mavi Marmara*...I realized that my life was in danger and that they were trying to kill me and to throw me into the water to kill me...At that point I felt a sharp blow to the left side of my stomach, and I realized that I had apparently been shot...[Note: The soldier was hospitalized in Israel and operated on. During the operation half of his lower intestine was removed, a hole in his stomach was repaired and his pancreas was found to have been damaged. He remained in the hospital for three weeks.]

2) A soldier who was one of the first to reach the upper deck was shot in the leg. He said, "...The order of descent got messed up and we didn't go down in the original order. [I] was apparently number four or five...As soon as I hit the deck...they started hitting me with iron bars. I also saw a terrorist holding an axe. I moved four, five meters toward the stern...and a group of six, and I think more, chased me. I remember perfectly what they were holding: three had iron bars painted light blue [the color of the ship]...there were two holding knives who were running toward me and wanted to stab me, and one other had a crowbar, an iron tool about half a meter [long], one end sharp and the other end flat...

3) He continued, "...I was surrounded by five men, and one more who came a couple of seconds later...They beat me with iron bars...they hit me in the face with the bars, and on the head a lot. My head was protected by a helmet, and after the battle I was told that my helmet was completely shattered...I tried to use my hands to protect my face, so my hands got hit a lot, and one was broken. [Note: One of his hands was found to have three broken bones and one cracked bone...]. Then a terrorist ran toward me with a knife and stabbed me in the chest as hard as he could...and all the time they kept beating me with iron bars. They beat my

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number of times and lost consciousness. The next thing I remember was regaining consciousness because of a severe pain in my knee...**That was when I realized I had been shot in the knee.** I also realized that my ear and head had been cut and that bones in my hand were broken..."

4) **Question:** "When the incident was over, what were your injuries?" **Answer:** "I was shot in the right knee, I had three fractures and a crack in my right hand, a deep cut in my left ear, internal bleeding, bruises from beating and cuts all over my body. My face was completely swollen..." **Question:** "In retrospect, do you know who shot you?" **Answer:** "As far as I know, when I was shot there were only five soldiers on board the ship. Three of them were thrown off the roof [another was shot in the stomach]...so none of the shots was fired by our forces..."

25. **Testimony of a soldier about an operative holding a gun:** "...I looked at the other side of the deck. I saw one of my comrades sitting on the deck; looking at it, his head was bleeding. There was a lot of yelling and noise everywhere. **And then I looked down and I saw a handgun with a [cocking] hammer.** I understood it was not one of our soldiers because we all have handguns, and they don't have hammers. **It was close to me, just two meters away. That was when I knew they had firearms aboard ship and that they were using them to shoot at us.** That was when I realized everything was different from the original plan...One of our commanders shouted that there was gunfire below [on the lower deck] and I ran with him to the port side of the hull...**The commander and I kept looking for the source of the gunfire and he told me that he saw a man hiding and shooting at us.** I kept guard with another soldier, and all the time someone kept looking at us from near the chimney in the stern and shooting at us sporadically..."

**Question:** "Did you see firearms on board the ship or firearms directed against your force?" **Answer:** "There was the gun I saw on the deck next to my commanding officer, who was lying there wounded. I know for certain that the handgun did not belong to us because we don't have that kind of handgun, it had a cocked hammer and none of our guns has a hammer. I also felt gunfire coming toward us from the lower deck. **It wasn't automatic fire, just a single bullet every couple of seconds.**"

26. Other testimonies:

1) **From a soldier:** "While we were searching the hall we found one of our guns with an empty magazine and the slide pulled back hidden under a couch. [Note: i.e., someone had fired all the bullets...]"

2) **From another soldier:** "When we sailed the ship to Ashqelon we searched it. I went back to the bridge and rejoined my team. During the search we found large quantities of weapons, including iron rods, pieces of metal, wooden clubs, **when all of**

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a sudden one of the soldiers found a gun under one of the couches. It was a gun taken from one of us. The magazine was still inside but empty and the slide was back, which meant it had been fired until it was out of ammunition and then hidden."

### Treatment of the Passengers and Wounded after the IDF Takeover of the Mavi Marmara

27. IDF officers and soldiers testified that after the takeover of the *Mavi Marmara* they behaved humanely toward the passengers despite the fact that many of them refused to follow orders or cooperate. Testimonies from soldiers indicate that requests for water or to use the facilities were complied with.

28. Soldiers testified that they tied only the hands of operatives who caused a disturbance, or those who they were afraid might pose a danger to the IDF forces. Their testimonies indicated that passengers who did not pose a danger and who requested that their hands be untied had their requests complied with.<sup>3</sup> According to a high-ranking Israeli Navy officer, "Below decks the passengers sat with their hands tied. We brought them food and water and took them to use the facilities when they requested. We loosened the bindings of those who found them painful...We did not tie the hands of the women and older men..."

29. Medical treatment: Testimonies from officers and soldiers, including the Israeli naval commando doctor who was on board the *Mavi Marmara* and the unit commander for aerial evacuation, indicate that the wounded received professional medical treatment and were evacuated by air in a complex operation. They were brought to a number of locations on board the ship and with considerable effort raised to the upper deck to ensure treatment and evacuation. Triage was performed in accordance with objective medical criteria, with the result that some of the wounded IDF soldiers received treatment after wounded operatives.

30. According to testimony, the wounded were evacuated very rapidly. Thirty-one were evacuated in six hours, an extremely rapid rate considering that there was only one evacuation point on board the ship and that at the same time other wounded individuals were being treated. The evacuation ended around noon. An IDF doctor aboard the *Mavi Marmara* said that as soon as the wounded began receiving treatment not one of them died. That was despite the fact that according to testimony, several of the wounded operatives refused

<sup>3</sup> The testimonies of the soldiers corroborate the description of the events in *The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara* and Sefik Dinc's interview on Israel's Channel 1 TV. He said the Israeli soldiers untied the hands of the several passengers, especially older passengers, women, and men who had not created a disturbance.

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medical treatment, claiming they preferred to die as shaheeds. In addition, according to the fleet doctor, in a number of cases wounded operatives tried to hamper medical treatment by removing and tearing off medical equipment.

31. According to the testimony of a high-ranking Israeli Navy officer, some of the wounded operatives were unwilling to leave the lounge below deck where they lay (apparently preferring to die rather than receive medical care from Israelis). He said that he had spoken to the doctor on board the ship, who told him that there were many wounded individuals who refused to be evacuated; some of them seriously injured. The IDF soldiers were forced to evacuate wounded operatives against their will to save their lives, while other operatives physically tried to prevent the soldiers from reaching them. Even after all the wounded had been evacuated some of the operatives continued physical resistance, and in one case the resistance was so violent the soldiers had to use force to restrain the operative.

### **IDF Forces Subjected to Physical and Verbal Abuse on the Flotilla's Other Five Ships**

32. The flotilla included five ships besides the *Mavi Marmara*. There were two Turkish IHH ships, the *Defney* and the *Gazze*, a European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG) ship, the *Sfendoni 8000*, the Free Gaza Movement's *Challenger*, and the *Sofia*, a ship sent by a Greek organization which joined the flotilla. Testimonies from IDF officers who commanded the takeover of the ships indicate that the IDF forces were subjected to various levels of physical and verbal abuse and the passengers expressed readiness to use violence against the soldiers, although not at the same level exhibited on board the *Mavi Marmara*.

33. According to the testimonies of IDF soldiers, during pre-boarding exchanges of communications the soldiers told the ships that the Gaza Strip was under closure and that they would not be able to enter. The ships' spokesmen replied that they were determined to reach Gaza and hurled invective (in English), such as "Go back to Auschwitz."

34. According to various testimonies:

1) Aboard the *Sfendoni 8000* the IDF forces encountered moderate violence, and even beyond: for example, an attempt at evasion was made which endangered other IDF vessels in the zone; objects were thrown when vessels were approached; an attempt was made to take a soldier's weapon; the soldiers were shoved down a ladder to the lower deck and dozens of passengers engaged in physical violence at close quarters. The passengers also attempted to

\* The testimonies corroborate the description of the events in *The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara*. According to the book, the operatives on board were prepared for every scenario, and expressed their readiness to die (pp. 23-24). According to ITIC information, before the violent confrontation seven of the nine operatives killed had stated, in one way or another, that they intended to die as shaheeds.

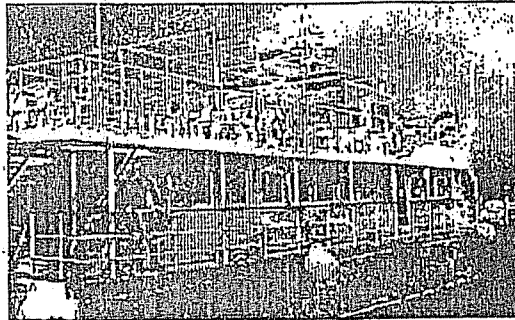
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congregate on the roof. [Note: According to testimony from a soldier regarding the *Sfendoni 8000*, "...One of the boats [the *Sfendoni 8000*] maneuvered itself very close to us, it was on a collision course. That is, it simply tried to run us down, and chased us even after we tried to evade it. It got as close as 20 meters, a very short distance in naval maneuvering, and it presented a clear and immediate danger to our vessel...Finally we made a sharp turn and got in back of it..."]



The *Sfendoni 8000*, the ECESG ship which participated in the flotilla. Its name refers to the number of Palestinians detained in Israel for terrorist activities.

2) The *Challenger* carried out evasion tactics and in effect made the force pursue it for a considerable distance. Once on board the soldiers were faced with moderate violence, which included both physical and verbal abuse, there were attempts to shove soldiers and some passengers barricaded themselves in certain cabins. In addition, there were a number of activists who caused a disturbance and refused to cease, and the soldiers were forced to use Tasers to restrain them.

3) Aboard the *Defney* significant preparations had been made for violence. The ship's crane had been positioned in such a way as to make it hard or impossible for soldiers to descend from a helicopter to the deck, forcing them to descend to the roof and endanger their lives. In addition, cables were strung, barbed wire was unrolled, gravel was strewn and there were stones and iron bars ready for use near the hull. In the communications room set up on board the ship the soldiers found videos documenting the crew deploying for the soldiers' arrival, preparing to prevent the takeover of the ship. According to one statement, when the soldiers arrived on board the ship they were met with verbal abuse from the crew.

4) On board the *Sofia* resistance included verbal abuse.

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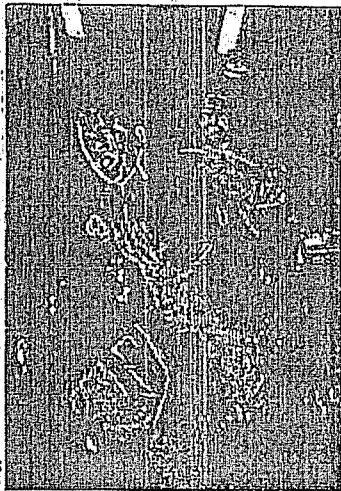
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## Appendix

**From the Testimonies of Three IDF Soldiers  
Who Were Attacked, Captured and Beaten by  
IHH Operatives and Their Accomplices after  
They Descended from the Helicopter**

**Testimony of Soldier A**

**Pictures of Soldier A from The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara,  
by Şefik Dinc**



Caption from the book: The soldier who was beaten with iron rods and wooden clubs. His face was bloodied and fear can be seen in his eyes as he is taken below.



Caption from the book: After the three well-armed soldiers landed, they were beaten and taken below decks.

1. "...Sliding down the rope to the deck of the ship we were in the air for two or three minutes. My commander told me to get a stun grenade ready to disperse the people waiting for us on the roof. From the helicopter I could make out about 15 people, some of them wearing gas masks or smoke masks and most of them wearing life jackets [although in the end it turned out they were definitely bulletproof vests].
2. "...At that point and in accordance with the preparations we had made, as well as briefings and simulations of what we would do, I still thought we would be faced with proportional resistance from peace activists and that at worst we would have to get a little physical, or

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maybe even use less lethal arms, paint [balls] or Tasers, to restrain them. During briefings, including one-on-one conversations with the commander of my team, it was stressed that firearms were to be used as a last resort and only in case our lives were in immediate danger.

3. "The [helicopter] pilot gave the order to lower the first rope from the opposite side of the helicopter and it was let down. I didn't see what happened next, but in retrospect [I realized that] the operatives on deck caught it and tied it to the ship. Then the second rope was thrown down on my side, and someone tapped me on the back and signaled me to slide down. I thought that when I reached the deck I would have to struggle against a mob of people but that I would be immediately backed up by the other soldiers and that we would overcome them.

4. "However, from the time I reached the deck until the next soldier arrived eight seconds passed, and that is a very long time for this type of action. While I was still in the air I saw that the 15 people who were on the roof had been joined by dozens of others wearing gas masks and rescue suits, and armed with clubs and iron rods, monkey wrenches and axes. When I was about two or two and a half meter above the deck, they took hold of the rope and dragged it aside.

5. "Before my feet hit the deck about ten men jumped on me and started beating me with clubs, iron bars, their fists and anything else they could find. They beat my whole body, but they focused especially my head and face. I have to make it clear that at that point I wasn't armed, my gun was still attached to my back and all I had in my vest was a Taser, which, in view of the brutality of the attack, was not really relevant. That was when I knew my life was really in immediate danger...

6. "They shoved me toward the hull and because there were so many of them I couldn't defend myself. A number of them picked me up by my legs and body and threw me down to the lower deck, a distance of about three and a half meters. I couldn't see any other soldiers on board and so I thought I was the only soldier who had landed. When I hit the lower deck I broke my arm and a mob of dozens of men jumped on me and simply tried to lynch me, that is, they broke my helmet and choked me, drove their fingers into my eyes and tried to gouge them out, pulled my arms and legs one way and then another, and beat me with clubs and iron bars, especially my head.

7. "I thought I was going to die, it was much worse than what we call a danger to your life. At that point they acted like they were fighting an enemy and had come to kill him, that is, kill me. I kept waiting for the blow to my head that would kill me. At that point the mob tore off my vest, where my gun was, and it fell out.

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8. "I realized that I couldn't overcome all of them and to save my life I wanted to jump into the water, but in the first place, I was afraid [I wouldn't fall into the water and] I would just land on a lower deck, and in the second place, the mob didn't let me get near the hull...

9. "...Someone hit me in the head with an iron bar. That disoriented me for a second and that was when they took my gun. At that point I thought the mob wanted to take me hostage and use me as a bargaining chip to enter the Gaza Strip. My face was covered with blood from the wounds to my head. The mob kept beating me and shoved me below decks. I realized it was useless to resist physically and that I couldn't fight them all off and I simply looked for the chance to jump into the water to escape. At that point I was certain I was going to die...

10. "...Then they took me below decks and kept taking photographs, videos, stills, it was like a press conference. They continued beating me, mostly around the head with clubs. Every time they beat me I thought I was going to pass out, or worse than that, die. All the time I was being shoved along below decks one of them kept choking me from behind and twisted my arms behind my back, and everyone who passed me joined the beating. When I was halfway down the ladder I started saying, 'Doctor, doctor,' and they brought a doctor to me. My head had a very deep cut. The doctor treated me for the cameras, but all he really did was wipe the blood off my forehead. I had an open skull wound which he didn't even touch. [Note: When the soldier was hospitalized in Israel, he was diagnosed with a deep skull wound which required 14 stitches and a fractured skull.] After that they took me down to a passenger lounge, laid me out on a couch and one of them kept watch over me, holding a club over my head. I asked for water and felt I had lost so much blood I was going to pass out. At first they wouldn't bring me water, and they only did after ten or fifteen minutes.

11. "That was when I saw there were two kinds of people in the room: there were terrorists, very large, strong men, about twenty to forty years old, armed with cold weapons running back and forth like they were in the middle of a operational activity. Some of them were talking on walkie-talkies, reporting about what was going on. Except for the fact that they weren't wearing uniforms, they looked exactly like a military force. There were also people who were relatively moderate, men and women, a little older who showed restraint and did not harm me.

12. "I saw that the two groups did not agree with each other. The terrorist group wanted to hurt and kill me, while the others tried to protect me. I was afraid that one of the terrorist group would get to me and either shoot me or stab me to death.

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13. "A short time after I was put below decks two other captured soldiers were brought in. I saw that soldier C had been very badly beaten and was exhausted and barely conscious. Soldier B was brought over to where I was, he was limping but I couldn't see anything external. However, later I found out that he had been stabbed in the stomach. Each one of us had a guard who held a club over our heads. I want people to know that all the time I was alone below decks, before soldiers B and C were brought in, **the mob kept pointing at me and yelling 'Gilad Shalit,' and they were very happy that an Israeli soldier had been captured.**

14. "A couple of minutes later soldier C began having convulsions, and I started moving around and yelling that they had to bring a doctor. The guards reacted by beating me and tied my hands. Because of my shouts a doctor came and poured water on C but that was all he did, he didn't take serious care of him...

15. "...Later the PA system came on and we could hear the captain saying that the ship had been taken over by the soldiers and that they were using firearms and that all the passengers had to go below decks. The announcement caused a lot of agitation in the ship and people yelled 'Allahu akbar' ['Allah is mighty'] and began inflaming each other's emotions. **After that they moved us [to the upper deck] and sat us near the prow.** I saw that soldier C wasn't walking, that they were dragging him. Two men dragged me as well. At that point I thought they were moving us to the prow to execute us...

16. "After about ten minutes they opened the door and took us out towards the prow, the man guarding me held me a little less tight and waved his arm back and forth toward one of our boats, and I understood it was to show our forces that they were holding Israeli soldiers. Since he was only holding me with one hand and not very tightly, I elbowed him in the ribs and **jumped into the water.** The guard tried to hold me but I got away from him and fell into the water. I did it because I knew it was the only way I could save my life...

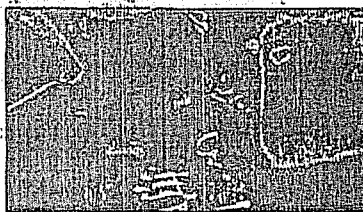
17. "...In the hospital they found I had skull fractures, two cranial hemorrhages, a deep cut on my head and many superficial wounds on my face. I also had a hemorrhage in one eye and my left arm was broken."

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## Testimony of Soldier B

### Pictures of Soldier B from *The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara*, by Şefik Dinc



Caption from the book: The soldiers taken captive were surprised when they were taken below decks just as they were surprised by their capture when they landed on the ship. They may have secretly thought they were going to be executed. The intervention of a number of volunteers prevented the IDF soldiers from being beaten more.

18. "...During the flight [to the site of the *Mavi Marmara*], I was in direct contact with the pilot and my commander, receiving ongoing updates. At first I was given to understand that there were between ten and fifteen men on the roof. (That was at first, after the helicopter arrived many more came up there...) I received a report that the naval force had met with serious, aggressive violence, and a decision had been made that soldiers would not climb [onto the ship from boats in the water...]. The fleet commander ordered me to prepare two stun grenades. On the port and starboard sides of the ship...we were planning to throw a rope. I saw a large group of men, thirty or forty on the roof, they were wearing rescue suits and gas masks, they were holding chairs...At that point I understood that the resistance to the soldiers being lowered from the helicopter had become physical; to keep us from reaching the ship...I skipped over the soldiers in the helicopter and went down third...As I slid down the rope I saw that there were four times as many people on the roof than there were before and I knew that confronting them was going to be different from what I first thought.

19. "As I was sliding down the rope I saw that they were throwing things at us. They hit me with iron bars and stones. When I reached the roof I felt a hard blow on my neck from behind, and I saw I was surrounded by about fifteen or twenty men, some of them holding clubs and some of them holding knives, axes. They were all wearing orange life jackets.

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some of them with kaffiyehs covering their faces and some wearing gas masks and some whose faces weren't hidden. I immediately understood that my life was in danger and that the lives of the other soldiers who were sliding down from the helicopter were also in danger.

20. "I knew that as commander I was not in control of the situation...I went flying from a blow. Someone gave me a hard shove and I fell. I found myself sitting on the floor with my back to the hull of the ship and people all around me. They were holding axes, knives, iron bars and clubs and running toward me, it was only going to take a second or two until they reached me...

21. "As soon as they reached me they snatched my gun and hit me as hard as they could with the bars and clubs. I was sitting with my back to the hull with my knees bent and protecting my face with my hands. All the people surrounding me were hitting me as hard as they could, especially my head. They were in a frenzy, screaming 'Allahu akbar' [Allah is great] over and over. They were hitting me all over, but mostly, as I said, my head.

22. "After about two minutes when they were beating me and I was trying to defend myself a number of men grabbed my arms and legs and picked me up, and I realized they were going to throw me overboard into the water. I resisted and struggled as hard as I could but it didn't do any good. I have to say that even then they continued hitting me hard in the stomach. I fought back as hard as I could until they got me over the hull. I hung onto it with both hands and was hanging from it. The people above me kept hitting my hands and the other group on the lower deck dragged me down by my legs.

23. "Then I fell down onto the lower deck very fast. When I hit the deck some more people rushed over to me because they heard shouts of 'Allahu akbar.' I was lying on the deck and many people were standing over me. One of them jumped on me and I felt a sharp pain in my lower abdomen. I put my hand out and felt a knife and knew I had been stabbed. Instinctively I pulled the knife out. I have to make it clear that even then, they were still beating me, even with clubs. Then some of them dragged me [off the deck and] into the ship. All I could think was that they were bringing me into the ship to kill me.

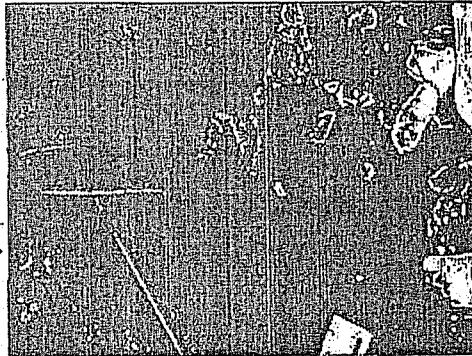
24. "I tried to resist and to find something to hang onto. Every time I resisted they beat me hard. At first they dragged me inside to a ladder, and before they shoved me down they took all my equipment. I resisted as best I could but without success. I remember they kept screaming, their eyes were insane and full of hate, and I knew it was the end and they were going to kill me.

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25. "They dragged me down a ladder, two men, one above and one below... while they were dragging me by my pants they started coming off and my shirt hiked up. **I saw that there was massive bleeding and I could see my intestines spilling out of my stomach. (Today I know it was because I pulled the knife out.)** I also saw I had a deep cut on my left arm and it was also bleeding a lot, and I could feel blood running from my nose into my mouth. My head was uncovered because they took my [head cover] after they took my equipment.



Operatives surrounding the wounded IDF soldier they captured, apparently soldier B. In the lower right-hand corner one of them can be seen holding a knife (hundreds of knives had been prepared as weapons for the confrontation) (Photo by Adem Ozkose for Reuters, May 31, 2010). The soldier was stabbed while he was wounded and helpless.

26. "While they were dragging me down the ladder I saw soldier C lying on the bottom deck with men acting crazy all around him, they kept beating him without stopping. They kept dragging me down the ladder and my pants kept coming off and my shirt kept hiking up. Then they moved off a little and I found myself surrounded by people with cameras, video and still cameras, and they kept taking pictures, I could see the flashes going off.

27. "That was when I asked for a doctor and pointed at the cut in my stomach. I received a gauze pad and pressed it on the wound on my stomach... Then I remember two men wearing bandannas made out of green Hamas flags who were really eager to kill us. They tried to strangle me and soldier C, and you could see the hate burning in their eyes. **They told us in English that they were going to kill us.** Apparently what kept them from doing it was that there were people who wouldn't let them and pushed them away.

28. "After that they dragged me to the next lower deck and put me in a lounge. I found soldier A there, his whole face was bloody. They put me on a couch across from him. It was a big

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lounge with a lot of couches. There were dozens of people there, women with veiled faces took care of wounded men, but not of us. Right after they brought me there they brought soldier C as well and put him on a couch next to me. They tied my hands and feet with rope. There was a man next to me who held a wooden stick in one hand and my hand in the other. He beat me with the stick and with his hand signaled that every time I moved he would hit me hard... Everything began to be blurry, I guess from loss of blood..."

29. Question: "Did any of the passengers actively try to help you?" Answer: "There were two groups, one which tried to kill us and was only waiting for the chance. The other tried to defuse the situation and they were the ones who kept the extremist group from killing us."

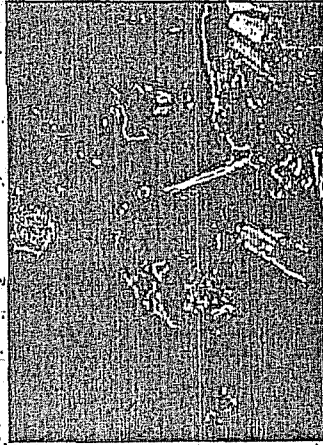
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## Testimony of Soldier C

### Pictures of Soldier A from The Bloodstained Mavi Marmara, by Şefik Dinç



30. Caption from the book: The soldiers who slid down ropes met with resistance from the passengers. The three first soldiers were captured and beaten with iron bars and wooden clubs and taken to the space below the captain's bridge.

30. "...At a certain point we received instructions that the helicopter would lower the force onto the roof with ropes. One of the soldiers sat near the door and saw a number of men on the roof...When I reached the deck I saw a terrorist with an iron crowbar waiting to hit me over the head, but when he tried to I shoved him away and four more terrorists jumped me straightaway. One of them wrapped a chain around my neck to choke me while I was trying to fight them off...

31. "At that point I lost consciousness, I saw stars, I imagine from being strangled. When I regained consciousness I felt I was in the air. Three or four terrorists were throwing me from the upper deck to the bridge deck. I felt heavy and I could tell I was falling fast and hard. About twenty men with clubs, axes and other weapons were waiting for me on the lower deck. As soon as I fell, and it seemed to me they had it all planned, they caught me and dragged me into the ship. I saw knives and they cut all my equipment away and they kept beating me all the time...Then they dragged us, I was barely conscious, they dragged us down a ladder into the ship...

31. "...They put me in a room [i.e., lounge] and kept beating me. The room was full of blue couches and they put me on one of them. There were two men, one of them kept hitting me

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all the time I was tied to the couch and they also held me down while he hit me. There was another guy there, he tried to calm him down, but it didn't do any good. Things began to get fuzzy and I didn't feel well, I could feel my head. That was when I lost consciousness. (My comrades told me I had convulsions as well.) The next thing I remember was waking up with the commander of the medical unit over me taking care of me, and then I lost consciousness again. The next time I woke up I was in the hospital..."

32. **Question:** "How did the organization of the operatives strike you?" **Answer:** "As I said before, it looked like it was premeditated, when they threw me from one deck to another there were people waiting there who knew what they were supposed to do with me, to take my equipment and undress me and from there to put me in an inner room, and all the other operatives took them [i.e., the other captured IDF soldiers] to the same room, it had to be organized."

33. **Question:** "How did the operatives look?" **Answer:** "They were all wearing the same thing, gas masks and orange vests. They seemed to be well prepared, they waited and it was as though everything had been planned. They were all big, heavy men and their objective seemed to be very clear, to harm us."

34. **Question:** "Were all the operatives the same?" **Answer:** "It seems to me that there was a group with a lot of equipment, and that was the group that came after us. All the time they were dragging me inside they were taking pictures, and I heard women's voices in English saying 'Stop hitting him' and other things."

35. **Question:** "Describe your wound and recuperation." **Answer:** "I was taken to the hospital unconscious and breathing with a respirator. My skull was fractured and bleeding internally. They sent me straight to the operating room. They fixed my skull, they put the pieces back in place, I had an open skull wound and I was lucky my brain was not damaged."

36. **Question:** "While the helicopter was approaching the ship did you or anyone else fire a weapon before you descended to the ship?" **Answer:** "No. The only thing we did was throw stun grenades to disperse the terrorists at the point of descent. Beyond that we didn't fire at all [from the helicopter]. No firearms were used."

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Law, Rosemary C

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From: OSCINFO@rccb.osis.gov  
Sent: Friday, December 31, 2010 10:40 AM  
Subject: OSC: Israeli Intel Center: IHH Remains at 'Forefront' of 'Anti-Israeli Hate' Campaign  
Attachments: GMP20101231739018001.pdf

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**Israeli Intel Center: IHH Remains at 'Forefront' of 'Anti-Israeli Hate' Campaign**

GMP20101231739018-Ramat Hasharon Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center in English 29 Dec 10

The *ITIC* paper's introductory passage states: "The Turkish IHH, which directed the flotilla led by the Mavi Marmara, continues at the forefront of an anti-Israeli hate and incitement campaign, adopting the maximalist Palestinian demands, calling for the annihilation of the 'Zionist entity' and exploiting and inflating the myth of the Mavi Marmara 'heroism.'"

(See attached file GMP20101231739018001.pdf). Click here to view the 7-page paper in pdf format.

[Description of Source: Ramat Hasharon Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center in English - Website of think tank set up by veterans of Israel's intelligence community "to highlight the contribution of Israeli Intelligence to the state's security," focuses on anti-Israeli incitement in PA and Arab world and on Islamic terrorism; URL: [www.intelligence.org.il](http://www.intelligence.org.il)]

<b>Source Name</b>	
Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center	
<b>Source Medium(s)</b>	
Internet	
<b>Source City</b>	
Ramat Hasharon	
<b>Source Country</b>	
Israel	
<b>Source Start Date</b>	
12/29/2010	
<b>Source End Date</b>	
12/29/2010	
<b>Source Language(s)</b>	
English	
<b>Product ID</b>	
GMP20101231739018	
<b>Version</b>	
1	
<b>Content Type</b>	
Summary	
<b>Processing Indicator</b>	
OSC Summary	
<b>Precedence</b>	
Routine	
<b>Topic Country(s)</b>	
Israel, Turkey, Gaza Strip, West Bank	
<b>Topic Region(s)</b>	
Middle East, Europe	
<b>Topic Subregion(s)</b>	
Middle East, South Europe	
<b>Event(s)</b>	
<b>International Organization(s)</b>	
<b>Topic(s)</b>	
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL TERRORISM	
<b>Program Title(s)</b>	
<b>Program Type(s)</b>	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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DATE/CASE ID: 07 MAR 2012 201004163

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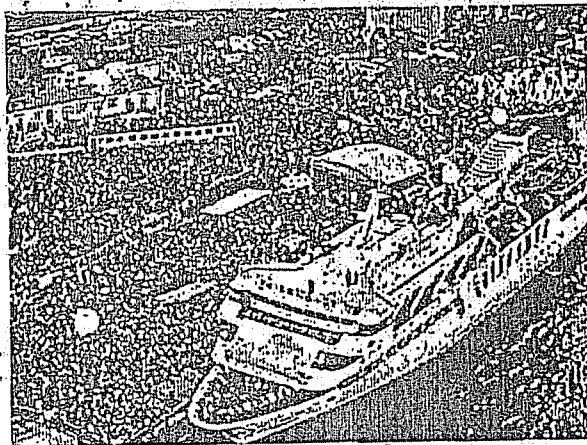
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The Meir Amit Intelligence and  
Terrorism Information Center

December 29, 2010

The Turkish IHH, which directed the flotilla led by the Mavi Marmara, continues at the forefront of an anti-Israeli hate and incitement campaign, adopting the maximalist Palestinian demands, calling for the annihilation of the "Zionist entity" and exploiting and inflating the myth of the Mavi Marmara "heroism."



The reception for the Mavi Marmara at the port of Istanbul. Participants shout "Death to Israel"  
(Yenisafak.com.tr website)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD  
DATE/CASE ID: 07 MAR 2012 201004163

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## Overview

1. The Turkish IHH, which played a key role in the last flotilla, continues at the forefront of an anti-Israeli hate and incitement campaign waged in Turkey and elsewhere. IHH spokesmen make extensive use of myth of the *Mavi Marmara's* "heroism" and have adopted the maximalist Palestinian demands, including the return of the Palestinians "to Jaffa, Tel Aviv and Haifa."

2. IHH leader Bülent Yildirim continues using anti-Semitic themes to defame Israel.<sup>1</sup> He recently claimed that "Zionists" controlled the United States and the global media and repeatedly accused Israel of deliberate "slaughter" aboard the *Mavi Marmara*. He also claimed that the takeover of the ship was meant to establish Israel's ownership of the oil and gas fields in the Mediterranean (and was carried out at a location where Israel wants to tap underwater natural gas reserves) and he defended the support IHH provides to Hamas.

3. The IHH approach was recently expressed at three additional events:

A. At the reception for the *Mavi Marmara* at the port of Istanbul on December 27: Thousands of people participated in the reception. The families of the operatives killed aboard the ship and representatives from various countries attended, as did Muhammad Sawalha, a Hamas activist who lives in Britain and participates in organizing flotillas. Senior members of the Turkish government did not attend. The crowd shouted "Death to Israel" (Al-Jazeera TV, December 26; Yeniasafak, December 27, 2010).

B. At the reception for the Asian convoy during its tour of a number of Turkish cities (the convoy did not reach Istanbul): Convoy participants were welcomed by senior IHH figures. The convoy's passage through Turkey was exploited for displays of hatred for Israel, although it was not widely covered by the Turkish media.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see the date bulletin "IHH leader Bülent Yildirim gave an interview focusing on the U.S. intention to designate the IHH as a terrorist organization and on the *Mavi Marmara* incident. Yildirim claimed "Zionists" controlled the U.S. and world media. He accused Israel of massacring the *Mavi Marmara* passengers and defended IHH assistance to Hamas" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/lpc\\_e147.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/lpc_e147.pdf).

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C. At the inauguration of a building constructed with IHH support in the town of Jabaliya in the northern Gaza Strip, where the IHH representative said he had hopes the Palestinians would return to Jaffa, Tel Aviv and Haifa.

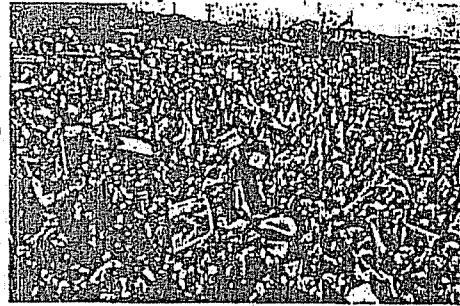
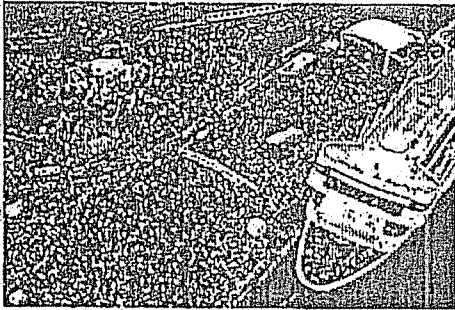
## The Reception for the Mavi Marmara in the Port of Istanbul

4. On December 26 IHH held a reception in the port of Istanbul for the *Mavi Marmara*, which had returned from being repaired. The boat, which was decorated with Palestinian flags and pictures of the nine IHH operatives killed in the confrontation with the IDF, was received by thousands of Turks shouting "Death to Israel." The ceremony was attended by families of those killed aboard the *Mavi Marmara* and representatives from various countries. Among the representatives was Muhammad Sawalha, a Hamas activist from Britain who participates in organizing flotillas. Senior members of the Turkish government did not attend (Al-Jazeera TV, December 26; Yenisafak, December 27, 2010).

5. IHH leader Bülent Yildirim gave a speech to inflate the myth of the "heroism" of the *Mavi Marmara*. He praised the struggle against the IDF soldiers and claimed that Israel attacked the ship with "dozens of boats, warships, helicopters and even submarines" and that "the Israeli soldiers used every possible weapon except an atomic bomb." He admitted that the passengers used force in their struggle against the IDF soldiers, asking if anyone expected them not to use force to resist such an attack.

6. Bülent Yildirim announced that [IHH] would struggle against "the filth that is Israel" and called for "release from the burden that Israel puts on the back of the Middle East." He also criticized the leaders of the Islamic countries who, "if they wanted to, could wipe Zionism off the face of the earth." He said that in a short time representatives from "at least 100 countries" would sail to the Gaza Strip, until the so-called "siege" was totally lifted (Yenisafak, December 26, 2010).

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The reception for the Mavi Marmara (yenikit.com website).

### IHH Display of Hatred for Israel during a Reception for the Asian Convoy

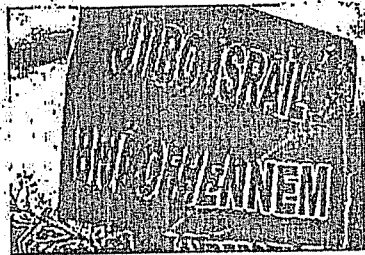
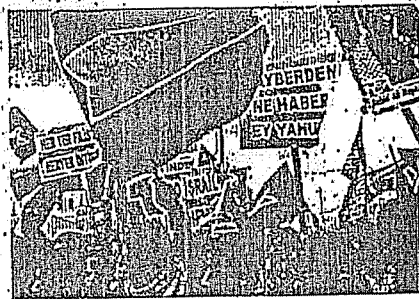
7. IHH has become a sponsor of the Asian convoy, which arrived in Turkey on December 17 on its way to the Gaza Strip (via the Syrian port of Latakia). During a tour of a number of Turkish cities (the convoy did not reach Istanbul) the participants were received by senior IHH figures. Their passage through Turkey was exploited for a display of hatred for Israel. However, the visit was not widely covered by the Turkish media (with the exception of the IHH website, and the local media in places visited by the participants and in the Turkish Islamist press).

8. In the eastern Turkish city of Diyarbakir a reception was held for the convoy participants and attended by IHH leader Bülent Yıldırım. The crowd held Palestinian flags and signs in support of Hamas, as well as posters with the picture of one of the operatives killed aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, who claimed that he was "a descendant of Salah al-Din." In his speech Bülent Yıldırım said that Israel now had to deal with "all the Salah al-Dins," and that IHH stood shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed of the earth; "in Turkey, Kurdistan, the Caucasus and Bosnia (Diyarbakirsoz.com, December 19, 2010).



IHH leader Bülent Yıldırım speaks at the reception for the convoy (IHH website, December 20, 2010).

9. During the ceremony, Palestinian flags were waved along with signs with anti-Israeli slogans and calls for Muslim unity. One sign read "Palestine is everywhere, the revolution is everywhere" and another referred to the battle of Khaybar, where the armies of Islam killed the Jewish tribes which resisted Muhammad and forced them to convert to Islam. Pictures showed a large sign with Ahmed Yassin, Hamas founder, and one reading, "Muslim, when will you awake?" and "Israel, go to hell!" (IHH website, December 20, 2010).



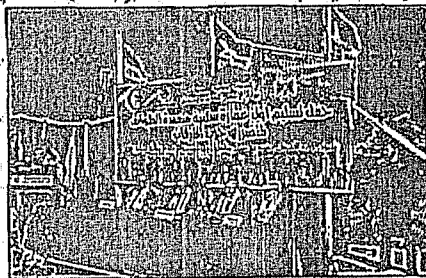
The signs waved at the reception for the convoy. Top: "Palestine is everywhere, the revolution is everywhere," and a reference to the battle of Khaybar. Lower left: "Israel, go to hell." Lower right: A picture of Ahmed Yassin, Hamas founder, and under it a sign reading "Muslim, when will you awake?" (IHH website, December 20, 2010).

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### Inaugurating a Building in Jabaliya Constructed with IHH Support

10. On December 15, 2010, a ceremony was held in the Gaza Strip to inaugurate a new apartment building renovated after it was damaged during Operation Cast Lead. The building, in the northeastern Gaza Strip town of Jabaliya (from which rockets have often been launched into Israeli territory), was constructed with IHH funds; the construction was supervised by the public works ministry of the de facto Hamas administration. The ceremony was conducted by Muhammad Kaya, IHH representative in the Gaza Strip,<sup>2</sup> and attended by senior figures in the de facto Hamas administration, including Yousef al-Mansi, public works minister; Issa al-Nashar, advisor to Ismail Haniya; and other public figures (IHH website, December 23, 2010).



The festive ceremony led by Muhammad Kaya, IHH representative in the Gaza Strip (Hamas website).

11. During the ceremony, at which the families received the keys to their apartments, Muhammad Kaya gave an anti-Israeli speech. He said, "We [IHH] represent Turkey, and our interest and goal is not to feed the Palestinian people and bring them food, but to help them stand on their feet in face of the occupation's oppression and support them in confronting their enemies. We are certain that if the force on this land [i.e., the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip] submitted to imperialist dictates money would flow in from every side, but this force refused [to surrender to all the dictates] and stood firm in the face of challenges." He added that "We the Turkish Muslim people will continue to stand at the side of the Palestinian people. Our spirit is with theirs, our money is [placed] with theirs, we will remain at their side and support them." He then thanked those who had helped rebuild

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<sup>2</sup> IHH has had a branch office in the Gaza Strip since January 2008. In November 2009 another IHH activist, Izzat Shahin, was sent to Judea and Samaria to open another branch. He transferred several thousand dollars from IHH to Hamas "charitable societies." In April 2010 he was detained on suspicion of funding terrorism and supporting Hamas and deported to Turkey at the request of Turkish officials. Muhammad Kaya continues as IHH representative in the Gaza Strip, where he has been very active.

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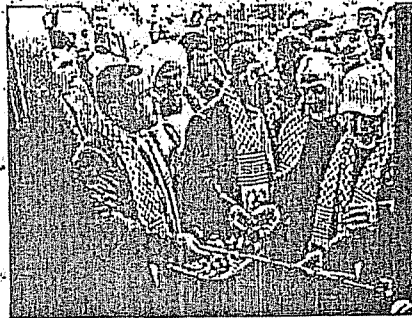
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the building and said that "the day will come when Palestinians will build their houses in Jaffa, Tel Aviv and Haifa."<sup>3</sup>



Muhammad Kaya, IHH representative the Gaza Strip (mohammed-74.maktoobblog.com/page/2 website).



Cutting the ribbon. Second from left: Muhammad Kaya, IHH representative next to Yousef al-Mansi, minister of public works (www.mashhad-as.net/?p=3832 website)

12. Yousef al-Mansi, public works minister in the de facto Hamas administration, said that the building was located near the [international] border. He said, "We are near a temporary border which was created by the occupation..." He expressed admiration for the Turkish people who were helping the Palestinians, especially IHH, which was funding construction projects in the Gaza Strip. He added, "Despite the differences between our peoples and languages, our [mutual] goal is the same, it is to liberate [all] Palestine" (Hamas' *Felasteen*).

<sup>3</sup> <http://samanews.com/index.php?act=Show&id=83670>, December 15, 2010. Muhammad Kaya referred to Tel Aviv as "Tel al-Zahour," "the hill of flowers." The translation close to the Arabic "Tel al-Rabi'a," the literal Arabic translation of Tel Aviv "the hill of spring."

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StateDept01011

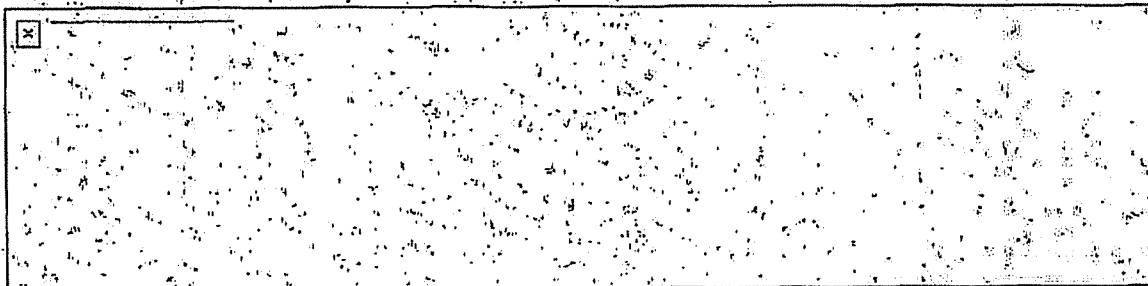
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H50

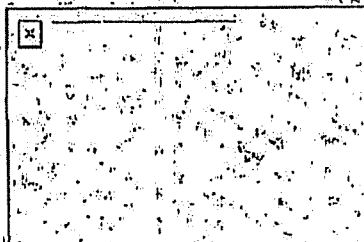
Law, Rosemary C

RELEASED IN FULL

From: The Israel Project [press@theisraelproject.org]  
Sent: Friday, June 04, 2010 12:21 AM  
To: Nelson, Timothy (Tel Aviv)  
Subject: The TIP Sheet - Update on the Gaza Flotilla



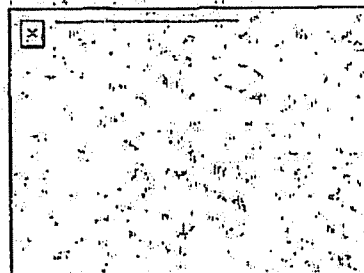
**The TIP Sheet**  
**Update on the Gaza Flotilla**  
*June 3rd, 2010*



**'We Will Never Apologize for Defending Ourselves' (Video)**  
Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on FoxNews, June 2, 2010

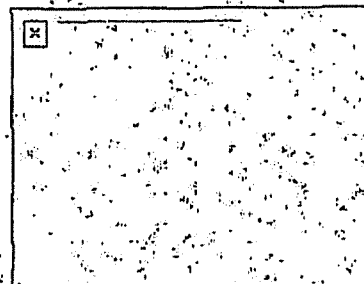
Israeli PM Netanyahu says raid of Gaza flotilla was justified; accuses international community of hypocrisy

**Watch the Video :: Read the Transcript**



**Upcoming Pro-Israel Rallies / Events**  
***TIP List of rally times and dates for today through Sunday, June 6th, 2010, taking place throughout the United States and Canada***

If you know of events occurring that are not listed, please let us know and we will include them in our next e-mail. We will continue to update this list as updated information becomes available. [\[more\]](#)



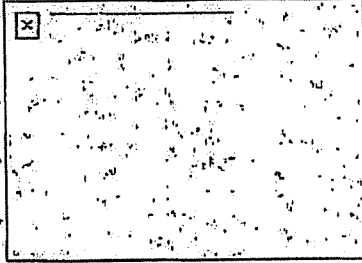
**Before Facts Known, European Officials Rushed to Judgment and Condemned Israel's Attempts to Stop Illegal Flotilla**  
***U.S. Leaders More Cautious, Backed Israel as Fuller Story Emerged;***  
***At Least 3 Among Dead Set out to Become "Martyrs"***  
TIP Press Release, June 3, 2010

Several European leaders were quick to condemn Israel's campaign Monday (May 31) to prevent an illegal flotilla from reaching Gaza - well before information and video footage showed that the self-described human rights activists aboard one of the ships were armed and violently attacked Israeli military personnel. [\[more\]](#)

**New Ship Headed for Gaza despite Israeli Prohibitions**  
***Vessel Exploiting Woman Killed While Working for Extremist***

UNCLASSIFIED

**Movement; Hamas Refusing to Allow Flotilla Aid into Gaza**  
TIP Press Release, June 2, 2010.



In the aftermath of a pre-meditated attack on Israeli soldiers attempting to intercept an illegal flotilla bound for Gaza from Turkey, another aid ship, the Irish-owned MV Rachel Corrie is headed for Gaza. [\[more\]](#)

Anti-Israel activist Rachel Corrie, who died in 2003, burning an American flag

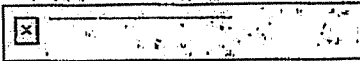
**PMW Bulletins - Three of the four Turks killed on ship sought Martyr's death**

Article By Itamar Marcus and Nan Jacques Zilberdik, June 3, 2010



"Three of the four Turks killed in the Israeli attack on the "Freedom Flotilla" bound for the Gaza Strip wanted to die as Martyrs, said their relatives and friends. The wife of one of them, Ali Haydar Bengi, told the Vatan daily... [\[more\]](#)

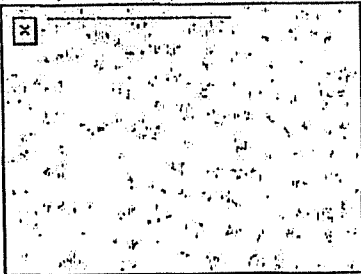
**Facts Beyond the Spin: Israel Delivers Massive Aid to Gaza**  
June 2, 2010



Despite the fact that Israel publicly offered to inspect and then transfer the flotilla's aid to Gaza several days prior to the incident, many opponents of Israel are now making wild accusations that humanitarian supplies are being blocked from entering Gaza. [\[more\]](#)

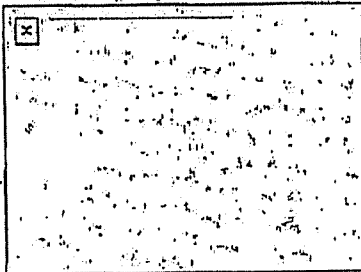
**New U.S. Bipartisan Poll on Prospects for Peace**

June 1, 2010: Key findings from The Israel Project's poll on peace process conducted just days before flotilla incident near Gaza coast



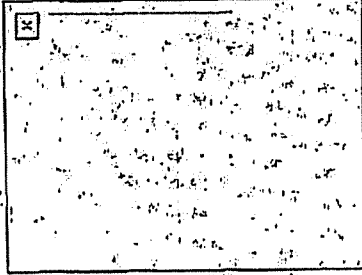
- Majority says U.S. should side with Israel over the Palestinians in ongoing conflict
- Majority agree that Prime Minister Netanyahu's government is committed to peace

**Poll Questions (PDF) :: PowerPoint Presentation**



**Vice President Joe Biden on Charlie Rose (Video)**  
June 2, 2010

UNCLASSIFIED



**Israeli Ambassador to U.S. Michael Oren interviewed by Bret Baier**  
FoxNewsChannel, June 1, 2010

Extended interview: Official defends deadly Israeli raid of Gaza flotilla  
[\[watch video\]](#)



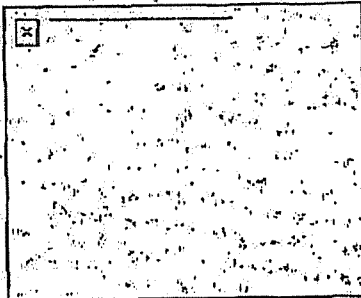
**Lt. Col. Avital Leibowitz Interviewed on CNN (Video)**  
**Israel Defense Forces respond to criticism following raid**  
June 2, 2010



**A Botched Raid, a Vital Embargo**  
Article by Daniel Gordis, New York Times, June 2, 2010

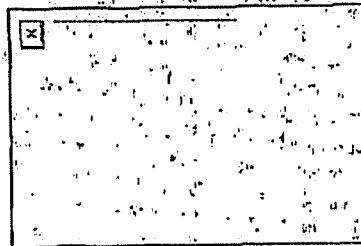
In the last few days, Jerusalem has been blanketed by an unusual combination of humiliation and steely determination. How is it, people here wondered aloud, that the same country that tripled its size in three lightning days in June 1967 and then pulled off the rescue at Entebbe nine years later now seems to botch everything? [\[more\]](#)

Attacks on Israeli forces boarding the Marmara (Photo: IDF Spokesperson)



**MOWBRAY: Freedom Flotilla flotsam**  
**Gaza blockade doesn't stop anti-Israeli propaganda**  
Article by Joel Mowbray, WashingtonTimes, June 1, 2010

Though the diplomatic fallout from the botched raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla this week will not be known for some time, the mainstream media already have suffered a serious blow to their credibility. [\[more\]](#)

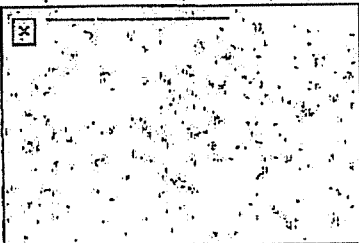


**Flotilla aid refused by Hamas**  
**"This proves that the whole thing was a provocation," official says.**  
Article by Khaled Abu Toameh, Ron Friedman and Abe Selig,  
Jerusalem Post, June 3, 2010

Hamas officials on Wednesday refused to allow into the Gaza Strip 21 truckloads of humanitarian aid that had been offloaded from the Gaza-bound flotilla ships currently docked at Ashdod Port, until "all" of those detained in Monday's naval raid were released. [\[more\]](#)

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# UNCLASSIFIED



## Flotilla raid: Turkish jihadis bent on violence attacked troops, Israel claims

*Turkish newspapers report that three of the four Turks killed were ready for martyrdom*

Article by Harriet Sherwood for Guardian.co.uk, June 2, 2010

A hardcore of 40 Turkish jihadis on board the Mavi Marmara was responsible for the violence that led to nine deaths and dozens of injuries on the flotilla taking aid to Gaza, the Israeli government claimed today. [\[more\]](#)

## Gaza Flotilla Had Ties To Terrorist Organizations, Claims British Officer

Article by Sarah Mamula for Talk Radio News Service, June 2, 2010

Colonel Richard Kemp, a former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, said the individuals aboard the Gaza-bound flotilla raided by the Israeli military earlier this week were "hard core activists intent on violence." [\[more\]](#)

## TIP Conference Call with Col. Kemp, June 2, 2010

[Listen to the Audio \(Mp3\)](#)

## Ten deaths for an inverted truth

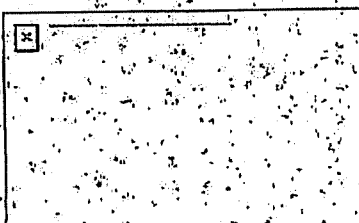
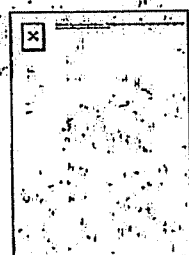
Article by Fiamma Nirenstein, June 1, 2010

With its deaths and wounded, last night's episode on the Turkish ship, has diabolical elements. What is diabolical is the reversal, the lie that is being designed by international public opinion, as in the battle in Jenin and like the death of Mohamad Al Dura: the truth, apart from being tragic and regretful, has been inverted, flipping responsibility. [\[more\]](#)

## Rep. Barton supports Israel's blockade & its battle against terrorists in Gaza

Official Statement from Congressman Joe Barton, June 1, 2010

Rep Joe Barton (R-Ennis/Arlington) issued the following statement in response to this weekend's events aboard a ship trying to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip: "Israel is a unique outpost for democracy in the Middle East and a longtime, valuable friend to the United States." [\[more\]](#)



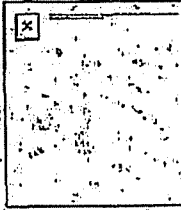
## Q&A-Is Israel's naval blockade of Gaza legal?

Article by Jonathan Saul for Reuters, June 2, 2010

Israel has said it will continue a naval blockade of the Gaza Strip despite growing global pressure to lift the siege after a navy raid on a Turkish ferry carrying aid killed nine activists this week. [\[more\]](#)

A pro-Palestinian activist is evacuated to Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabi/AFP/Getty Images

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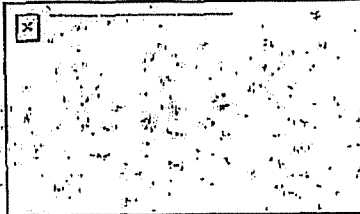
## Operation 'Sea Breeze' Legal Aspects (PDF)

From The Military Strategic Information Section, International Military Cooperation Department, Strategic Division, Israel Defense Forces

For several years, the State of Israel has been engaged in an ongoing armed conflict with terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. [\[more\]](#)

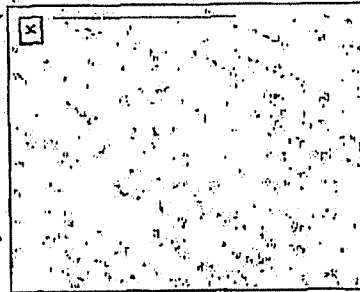


## Flotilla-Fallout Video Series



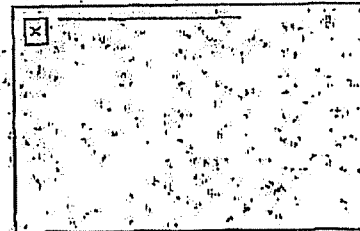
Videos of Monday's tragic incident off the coast of Israel  
<http://www.theisraelproject.org/videos>

TIP will continue to monitor the situation and upload new royalty-free footage to our video player as new content is available.



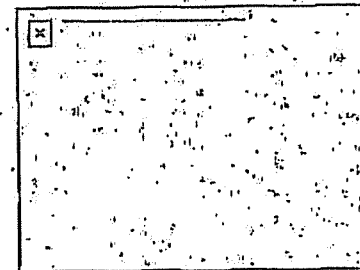
## Flotilla YouTube Videos from Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- IDF - Navy Warns Flotilla (31 May 2010)
- MFA Spokesman on Gaza Flotilla - 24 May 2010



## Flotilla YouTube Videos from the IDF Spokesperson's Unit:

- Flotilla Rioters Prepare Rods, Slingshots, Broken Bottles and Metal Objects to Attack IDF Soldiers
- Weapons Found on the Flotilla Ship Mavi Marmara Used by Activists Against IDF Soldiers
- Demonstrators Use Violence Against Israeli Navy Soldiers Attempting to Board Ship
- IDF Transfers Humanitarian Aid From Gaza Flotilla to Gaza Strip
- More



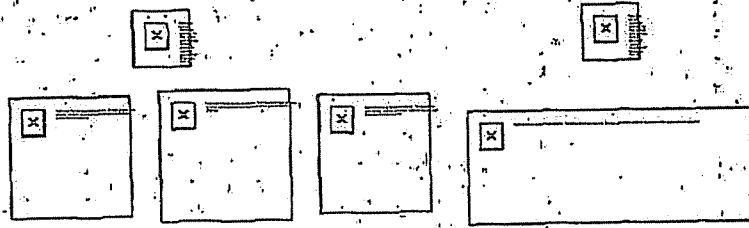
## More Flotilla Videos:

- Daniel in the lions' den draws fangs: Muslims deny flotilla lynch-mob- then become one  
Posted by Democast, June 1, 2010
- True Human Rights Activists don't hug Vicious HR Violators  
Posted by user MHLE2010, May 27, 2010
- Beating the Hell Out of Israeli Naval Commandos  
BBC Footage posted by user LetsFreeGaza, May 31, 2010

For a continued collection of multimedia related to the Gaza Flotilla, visit [www.theisraelproject.org/flotilla](http://www.theisraelproject.org/flotilla)

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Connect With TIP



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H51

Law, Rosemary C

From: Paley, Abram W  
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2010 9:03 AM  
To: Nelson, Timothy (Tel Aviv); Omer.Meisel@ic.fbi.gov  
Subject: RE: Israel considers these individuals to be terrorists

RELEASED IN FULL

Categories: Working

Thanks Tim, will look into this on the Consular end.

SBU  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Nelson, Timothy (Tel Aviv)  
Sent: Wednesday, December 22, 2010 11:52 AM  
To: Paley, Abram W; Omer.Meisel@ic.fbi.gov  
Subject: Israel considers these individuals to be terrorists

Abram and Omer,

I just wanted to flag this information for you on individuals that Israel alleges are terrorists, including an AmCit and resident.

### Specific Flotilla Passangers Linked to Al-Qaeda, Hamas and Other Terror Organizations, 6 June 2010

Posted on June 6, 2010 by Israel Defense Forces

#### Specific Flotilla Passengers are Active Terror Operatives Linked to Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Other Organizations

6 June 2010

The following passengers on board the Mavi Marmara are known to be involved in terrorist activity. The Mavi Marmara attempted to break the maritime closure on the Gaza Strip on Monday, May 31 2010, and was boarded by Israel Navy forces.

Fatimah Mahmadi (born 1979), is a United States resident of Iranian origin, and an active member of the organization "Viva Palestine", she attempted to smuggle forbidden electronic components into the Gaza Strip.

Ken O'Keefe (Born 1969), an American and British citizen, is a radical anti-Israel activist and operative of the Hamas Terror organization. He attempted to enter the Gaza Strip in order to form and train a commando unit for the Palestinian terror organization.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E. AHMAD  
DATE/CASE ID: 07 MAR 2012 201004163

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Hassan Iynasi (born 1982), a Turkish citizen and activist in a Turkish charity organization, is known of providing financial support to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Terror organization.

Hussein Urosh, a Turkish citizen and activist in the IHH organization, was on his way to the Gaza Strip in order to assist in smuggling Al-Qaeda operatives via Turkey into the Strip.

Ahmad Umimon (born 1959), is a French citizen of Moroccan origin, and an operative of the Hamas Terrorist organization.

I just came across it while doing some research for the Human Rights Report:

Tim

---

Timothy D. Nelson  
*Political Officer*  
U.S. EMBASSY TEL AVIV  
Tel: 972-3-519-7515  
[NelsonTD@state.gov](mailto:NelsonTD@state.gov)

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

A53

Law, Rosemary C

From: Levin, Jan X  
 Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2011 9:51 AM  
 To: Grubb, Jason B; Silverman, Robert J  
 Cc: Goldberger, Thomas H  
 Subject: FW: (C) Israeli AMB Levy Meets SFRC Staffer Bruder 6/1; Mavi Marmara, AKP's Relations with the PA

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

Categories: Working

fyi

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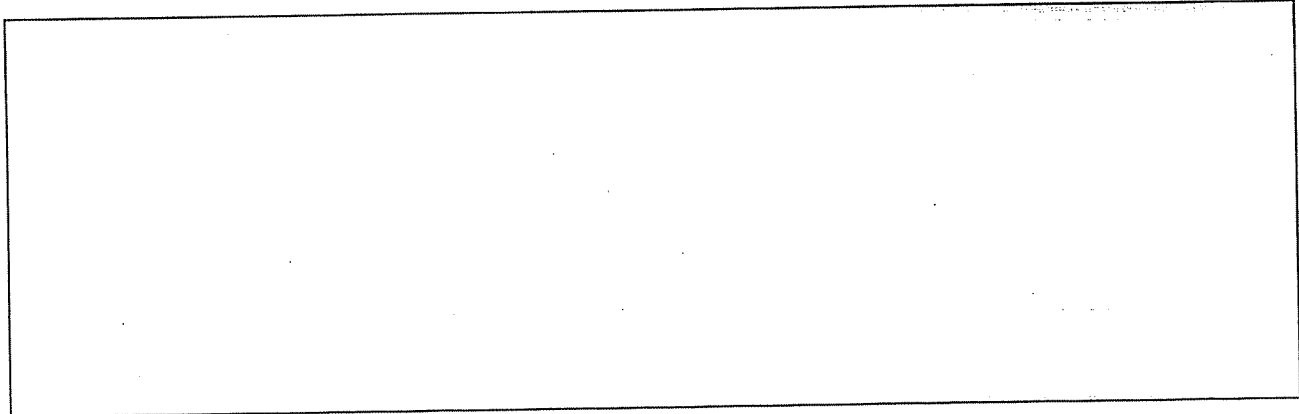
From: Howard, Jeremiah H  
 Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2011 2:18 PM  
 To: Levin, Jan X  
 Subject: (C) Israeli AMB Levy Meets SFRC Staffer Bruder 6/1; Mavi Marmara, AKP's Relations with the PA

SECRET

May 31 Mavi Marmara Commemoration

(C) Levy was pleasantly surprised by the desultory observance of the anniversary in Ankara. "Except for Taksim," he said during a June 1 conversation with us, "nothing much happened." According to Israeli security cameras, "five or six" demonstrators gathered without incident in front of the ambassador's residence to mark the moment of the Israel Defense Force's nighttime boarding of the Mavi Marmara a year ago. Levy noted no attempt by any major political party, including the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), to exploit the anniversary during this pre-parliamentary election campaign season. (NOTE: I added this para to Istanbul's cable on the commemoration events there.)

New Flotilla



B1

Jeremiah Howard

UNCLASSIFIED

Deputy Political Counselor

Embassy Ankara - Turkey

T: 90 312 457-7149

IVG: 295-7149

Classification: SECRET

Classified by: J. Howard, D/POLCOUNS

Reason: 1.4(b)

Declassify On: 2021/06/01

UNCLASSIFIED

H55

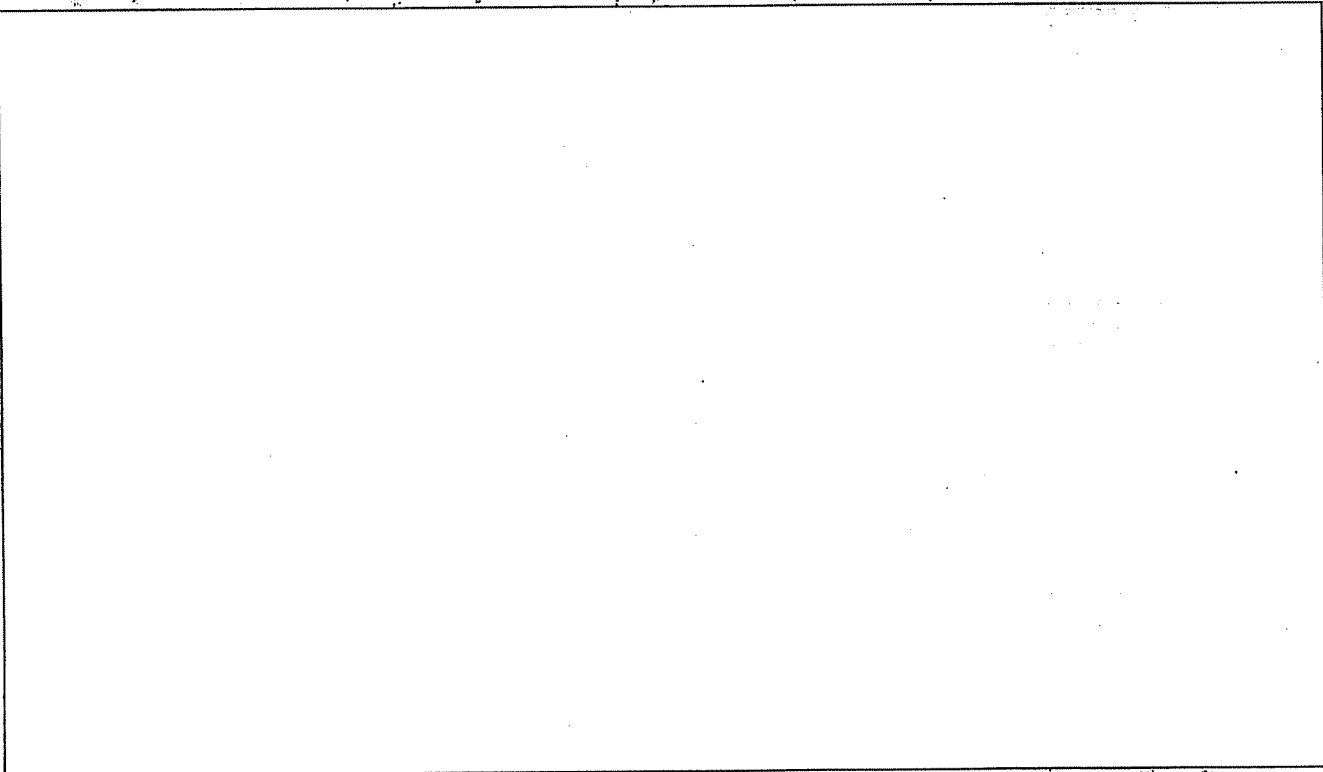
Law, Rosemary C

From: Eussen, Matthew M  
 Sent: Friday, July 01, 2011 8:46 AM  
 To: #EU 'JACIDEM'; '6th Fleet Watch'; [redacted] CIV OSD POLICY; [redacted] CIV; Berns, David B; [redacted] CIV OSD POLICY; 'Brown, Daniel E. LT'; 'Christopher Koenig'; 'Christopher Smith'; 'Clay, Andrea'; 'Cross, [redacted]'; [redacted] CIV, OSD-POLICY; [redacted] Doutrich, Jack T; [redacted] Eussen, Matthew M; [redacted] @nmic.navy.smil.mil'; 'Friedmann, Chelsey'; 'Goldberger, Thomas H'; 'Greene, Elisa B'; 'Holliday, Gregory E'; [redacted] 'J2 ADDI JCS'; 'J22 MNA'; 'JAC IDWM MARWO'; 'JAC Watch SWO'; 'Jakobson, Nicholas W'; 'Joshua Townley'; 'Kumar, Prem G.'; 'Kyna Simpson'; [redacted] JCS J5 ILD'; 'Levin, Jan X'; [redacted] CIV OSD POLICY; [redacted] @cvn69.navy.smil.mil'; 'MNA-4 Israel-Jordan-Palestine'; 'Mulroy, Kara L.'; 'O'Brien, Gregory J (OES)'; [redacted] 'Scherr, Oriana R.'; [redacted]; 'Selinger, Thomas B'; 'SES-O OPS-Watch Team'; 'Silverman, Robert J'; [redacted] 'Sindle, James M'; [redacted] CIV, OSD-POLICY; [redacted] 'Timothy Weber'; [redacted] @nasic.wrightpatterson.af.smil.mil); [redacted] (USA) OSD POLICY; 'Tyson, Paul H'; 'Watch Europe'; [redacted] CIV OSD POLICY'

B6

Subject: "Free Gaza 2" Flotilla Update -- July 1  
 Categories: Working

[Please note new additions to the collective: David Berns, Elisa Greene, and SES Operations Watch Team.]



B1

(SBU) MFA Consular Affairs Bureau Hotline: The MFA has established a hotline that can be used to coordinate consular contact with detained foreign nationals who participate in the flotilla. The number (+972-2-530-4050) will be operational once ships arrive in Israeli ports. The MFA's notice also designates three detention facilities -- Elah in Beersheva, Dekel in Beersheva, and Saharonim in Ketsiyot -- where foreign consuls may meet their nationals once coordinated through the hotline.

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(SBU) Additional "Flotillas":

- o Israeli aviation security authorities and Koren have alerted us to a possible attempt on July 8 to stage a mass "fly-in" to Israel's Ben Gurion Airport of as many as 200 protesters. Israeli authorities continue to monitor Facebook and social media sites coordinating this effort but do not yet have other sources of information to provide.
- o Israeli online media outlet *Y-net*, quoting Iran's *Press TV*, reported late June 30 that a South African relief group, headed by Sheikh Walid el-Saadi, would drive a "relief convoy" 10,000 miles from South Africa to Sudan, where they would take a Ferry to Al-Arish, Egypt. No timeline was provided in the press report, and it does not appear that the group will seek to break the blockade of Gaza.

Sensitivity: Sensitive

Classification: SECRET//NOFORN

Derived From: DSCG 05-1 (a), (b), (d) Political Section, U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv, Department of State

Declassify On: 2021/07/01

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WI

RELEASED IN FULL

**Erdogan biggest loser in Israeli crime**  
**Al Hayat, Tuesday 08 June by Bakr Sidqi**

This is not the first US position of its kind. It seems like a trend that is being repeated over and over by the American traditional policy towards Israel. But it is the most embarrassing thus far. The Israeli attack was not against Palestinians or Arabs this time and for whom there is no western respect. It is also not against the "allowed to attack" Hamas and Hezbollah. It is rather against peace activists from many nationalities on a ship carrying flags of many countries.

It is an attack on a NATO member country in international waters which according to international law is punishable sea piracy.

These new considerations made the American cover for the crime more embarrassing than before. The question is why the American fight to defend a criminal. A different answer may appear if we considered Istanbul celebrations for being the European cultural capital.

Even the most defensive of the Turkish government decisions appeared in the press hesitant not knowing what to say or do. The government said the war option is not discussed. The Turkish leadership is un-precedently hesitant. The Israeli operation hid the Turkish head. No one expected this Turkish response to what happened. The new international player as a regional power that results in stability of the region is now turning its face after taking a slap on the other side.

No commandoes can kill people, all Turks, except with a political decision from the highest levels. Israel will not conduct such a stupidity unless it knows it will survive it.

This is where the American role appears in this process and this is what gives Israel the completely logical political sense. Obama administration encouraged Turkey and Brazil to convince Iran to sign the nuclear exchange agreement a few weeks ago and then refused this agreement. The US Administration and Israel agreed to restrict and decrease the increasingly growing Turkish role in the past few years, and so happened the massacre.

**Tarek Al Humayed,**  
**Asharq Al Awsat, 08 June 2010,**

The ship or flotilla was not a military operation, but rather a peaceful civil operation and it embarrassed Israel in front of the international community. It put Israel under political and media siege instead of Gaza. Israel responded and began a talk about a partial siege lifting under world pressure to contain the angry international responses. The "resistance" and "non-moderates camp" did not using their loud speeches and words create such a position. They never embarrassed Israel. Peaceful work did not and this is what Syrian President Assad now calls "modern example".

Now those non-moderates are shocked and want to exchange the speeches and slogans with freedom ships. Will we learn the lesson?

**The Turkish role in the Middle East: its Likelihood and Limitations**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SHARON E AHMAD  
DATE/CASE ID: 07 MAR 2012 201004163

UNCLASSIFIED

StateDept01024

## UNCLASSIFIED

Mon, 07 June 2010 George Semaan

The "Sky Winds" that have blown on the Turkish ship "Marmara" were a gift from the skies to Turkey to finish building its strategy in the Middle East and lead a broad-scale international campaign to lift the blockade imposed on Gaza, at a time when a few days earlier, it had launched an initiative alongside Brazil in the context of the handling of the Iranian nuclear file. Indeed, the brutal Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla provided Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan with a rare opportunity to achieve a series of goals at once, as it is expected that the Flotilla will be able to accomplish what could have been accomplished by the Palestinian Intifada and was not seen for Palestinian and non-Palestinian reasons.

The escalation affecting the new Turkish policy toward Israel has reached its peak after the clashes started between the two countries following the war waged on Gaza at the end of 2008, beginning of 2009. Back then, Ankara adopted a stringent position and continued to repeat - until this day - that it will not disregard the violation of the human rights of the Palestinians. Later on, we saw the severe reprimands addressed by Erdogan to Israeli President Shimon Peres during a televised seminar in Davos, followed by what was considered by Ankara as being an inappropriate reception of its ambassador in Tel Aviv in the office of Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon.

Turkey's angry, harsh and radical position toward the Israeli attack went in line with the new course of its foreign policy and its attempts to establish balance between the two elements of Turkish identity: the European one and the Middle Eastern one. This forced it to become involved in many files, from the Balkans to Afghanistan going through Palestine and Iraq, to confirm its role as a key player in the region, hinder the Iranian momentum, enhance its negotiating position with Europe in the context of its attempts to join the European Union and present itself as an acceptable mediator in the resolution of the regional crises. This would be based on the moderate Islam of the Justice and Development Party, its ability to engage in dialogue with the extremist movements and parties, and consequently its ability to push them toward the positions and conditions of the international game.

Therefore, Israel's opponents became Turkey's friends, from Iran to Syria to Hamas which Erdogan said a couple of days ago "was not a terrorist" as it is described by the Americans and most of the Europeans. This was all conducted by Ankara without risking the severance of relations with the Hebrew State, in order to keep Tel Aviv's doors opened before it along with the doors of the decision-making capitals that have not relinquished and will never relinquish the Hebrew State and its military superiority.

The problem is that the Israeli right-wing government did not get the numerous signals sent by Turkey, as though it were not reading the transformations witnessed in the region and around the world. Early on, Ankara started changing its policies and the commercial, military and security relations imposed by the Cold War - since it is a member of the NATO - but also imposed by the overall Arab position toward the Cypriot issue and the support offered by Syria and Iran to the Kurdish opposition parties, namely the Kurdistan Workers Party. However, the transformations which followed the fall of the Soviet Camp, the domestic policy with which the Justice and Development Party approached the Kurdish issue, the development of the relations with Syria, then

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Iran and finally Iraq and the weakening of the grip of the military over politics due to the European conditions, all gave Ankara a wider margin of maneuver and allowed it to amend its policy. Moreover, we would not be adding anything new if we were to say that the growing Iranian influence in the region while carrying the banner of the Palestinian cause, also motivated Ankara to engage in the race over the acquisition of this banner while assisted by the alleviation witnessed on its Eastern front with Iraq and the improvement of its relations with Damascus in particular and the Arab world in general. This is especially true since in the past, it could not point its finger at Israel for using force with the Palestinians, considering that the latter could have responded by saying that Ankara was using the same logic with the Kurds!

So far, Turkey has managed to exploit the Israeli arrogance where many others have failed. It has thus advanced along the path of consecrating itself as a key player in the Middle East, at a time when the United States and the superpowers are trying to draw up the features of the regional order, from Afghanistan to Sudan going through Iraq, Palestine, the Gulf and Iran. Through the crisis it is managing with Israel, it was able to shift the international positions that were all reassured by the fact that the blockade imposed on Gaza was a blockade imposed on Iranian influence, while in light of this popular momentum in the Arab and Islamic world, it has become qualified to lead dialogue with Hamas and bring it closer to "peaceful Jihad" against the occupation. This step could achieve what the rockets and weapons smuggled into the Strip will never accomplish. On the other hand, Erdogan's refusal of the description attributed to the movement as being a "terrorist movement" carried a clear message to the world calling on it to recognize Hamas, a thing which may be followed by a call upon the latter to reconcile with the authority and uphold the international community's conditions for a settlement.

Turkey cannot go far at the level of the Palestinian cause, i.e. it cannot accomplish what the hardliners on the Arab side are seeking. It must hold the stick in the middle since it cannot sever its relations with Israel or stand in the rejectionist camp while disregarding the moderate Arabs whom it has embarrassed. However, this centrism will grant its campaign to lift the blockade imposed on Gaza an impact and a content that are different than those called for by Iran and the hardliners. Indeed, as much as Iran militarized and isolated "Hamas's Intifada," Marmara's peaceful action exposed the depth and bloodiness of Israeli brutality and forced all the major states – without an exception – to seek ways to change the painful reality.

Therefore, those drawn to Turkey's positions should not be overly optimistic in their expectations, and should wait to see how it will manage the outcome of this new development and this likelihood in the region. This is due to the fact that Ankara knows that its role at the level of the Palestinian cause is limited, and that the settlement cards will remain – for the most part – in the hands of the United States, considering that there is nothing pointing to the fact that these cards have shifted to another location ever since President Al-Sadat announced that most of the solution cards were held by Washington.

The Turkish-international campaign will increase the pressures on Netanyahu's government to force it to offer the concessions required by America and the international community in the negotiations with the Authority, i.e. help the initiative put forward by Washington which is sponsoring the talks. However, this goes against the Iranian policy that is calling for the rejection of

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the peace settlement in its entirety, and constitutes one of the elements of the conflict between the Islamic Republic on one hand, and the international community and the United States on the other. For their part, the hardliners in the ruling Coalition in Israel will find themselves much weaker in resisting a Likud leader if they are forced to take the pressures into consideration and respond to some conditions, especially since – on the long run – the Hebrew State cannot place Turkey in enemy ranks as it is the case with Iran because such a step would topple any Arab moderate policy toward the settlement and pose a major problem not only for Tel Aviv, but also for Washington.

The Americans perceive Turkey as being an important element of communication with Iran over many files, in Iraq in particular and in Central Asia in general. Moreover, following the attack on Marmara, they are aware of the fact that it will become an important channel of communication with Hamas and the extremist Palestinian factions, while knowing in advance that Turkey is not the Islamic Republic and cannot be handled the same way. It is viewed as a key player in the context of "international legitimacy" and as a power that could counter and contain the Iranian momentum. They are also counting on its ability to encourage Syria to balance its regional relations, while aware of its importance for their strategic interests. On the other hand, they truly realize what the right-wing government in Israel has disregarded, i.e. that since the establishment of the Hebrew State Turkey has been a major Islamic partner in guaranteeing the security of this state, just like the peace accord with Egypt and the Wadi Araba accord distanced the ghost of comprehensive Arab-Israeli war.

In the end, it is needless to say that Turkey's positions did not only reveal the absence of the Arab role, but also corroborated what some believed in regard to the fact that the entire Arab regime never truly existed, a thing which was exposed by the Cold War collapse. Moreover, the positions of Erdogan who has consecrated his overwhelming popular leadership in the Arab and Islamic worlds, might contribute to keeping his popularity afloat after it has started eroding in favor of the Republican People's Party which – according to opinion polls – has been taking the lead for quite some time, especially since its new leader has been calling for distancing the military from politics, as well as for more democracy and human rights.

### **The Rise of Erdogan and the Fall of the Arabs** Mon, 07 June 2010 Elias Harfoush

On the flip side of the picture of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, boarding the Freedom Flotilla, we should observe the fall of the Arabs, in all of their variations. It is no small thing for Turkish flags to fill the space of the rally organized by Hizbullah, and for the party's secretary general to compare what the "red flag" can do, along with the "yellow flag" of the resistance. However, the lesson in all of this is that the prime minister of Turkey is filling the vacuum in the region, which can also be called the impotence of the Arabs and their failure to play any role, whether positive or negative, thus leaving the field open to the whims of others, and their interests.

In this sense, it is not Turkey who is "returning to the umma (nation)," but the Arabs who are leaving it. Ottoman Turkey left this umma, or was actually removed from it, under the weight of Arab nationalist feeling, against the "Turkification" of the region, which has become a mere dream today. If Turkey were to return, it would be because these feelings of Arab nationalism have

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disappeared, and their place was taken by warring sects, tribes and ethnicities. When the Arabs stand by and look on, applauding the Turkish rising star, it does not occur to them to ask about the status of their own condition. Their situation allows "the Arabs' neighbors," as the secretary general of the Arab League says, to reap the fruit of existing crises in the region – most importantly the struggle with Israel, and exploit this popularity domestically against their opponents, whether in Ankara or Tehran. These neighbors reap these benefits in terms of their relations and interests with other countries, such as in the Iranian nuclear issue, or Turkey's regional influence and relations with the Europeans and the White House.

In such a climate, Erdogan is turning into another Abdel-Nasser, in the dreams of the Arabs: Abdel-Nasser, whose pictures were put up in the southern suburbs of Beirut, in a strange irony by the party, which is not known to be enamored of the pan-Arabism of the late Egyptian leader. However, it was another occasion to exploit people's feelings, from whichever direction they appear, irrespective of the truth of the convictions and political stances.

Just as the pictures provoke no question about the achievements of the late Egyptian president, not to mention of course the legacy of the June War defeat of 1967, the price of which is still being paid today, and whose tragic repercussions are still felt today, it is unlikely that pictures of Erdogan and his country's flags will provoke questioning about his accomplishments when it comes to Palestine, after the newspaper headlines disappear, and the congratulations over the Freedom rally end.

It is not strange that the "Turkey's return to the umma" is taking place under Erdogan himself, the leader of a party that is leaning toward a break with modern Turkish nationalism, in the sense of its racist insularity against the Arabs, which was anchored by Ataturk. Erdogan is the head of the Islamic party that derives many of its convictions from the ideas of Islamist parties in Arab states, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. These parties, as we know, are hostile to pan-Arabism, but do not mind support for their stances, from whichever direction.

However, despite this, and despite the temptation to engage in a comparison, there is a big difference between what Erdogan can do with Turkey, and what the Islamic Revolution in Iran has achieved, whether this involves relations with Israel, or the two countries' own domestic situation. Iran is now commemorating the 21st anniversary of the death of Khomeini, who undertook a true revolution against the previous regime. However, Erdogan faces many obstacles at home in undertaking such a coup against Turkey's secular regime. Moreover, the Turkish prime minister came to office as part of a democratic process, not a revolutionary-Islamic one. Such a process can only submit to accountability by the people, or else it will open the door to non-democratic forces that lie in wait for it, led by the army, and confront it by using force.

**Turkey and Putting the Storm to Good Use**  
Sat, 05 June 2010 Ghassan Charbel

Recep Tayyip Erdogan hastily grabbed the opportunity offered by the Israeli crime. He cannot act merciful towards the bloodshed of a number of his fellow countrymen. It is a question of dignity for the people of a great state in the region. Neither the people nor the army accepts to be insulted. Erdogan launched the storm so that he can be later entitled to contain it.

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Erdogan realized the importance of the opportunity, in order to strengthen his stance domestically and justify a more popular position in the region. It is not possible to reserve a great role in the Middle East without opposing the injustice from which the Palestinians suffer. He realized what Jamal Abdul Nasser, Hafez Assad, Khomeini, Saddam Hussein, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had realized before him. Erdogan's anger had a remarkably successful effect on the Arab street. His picture was raised in many capitals and he became more popular than many of his counterparts.

Erdogan caught the right moment. The crime represents an opportunity to launch a campaign for curtailing Israel. Turkey became aware of the importance of this curtailing campaign in light of the past years' experience. The main experience was the sponsorship of the indirect negotiations between Israel and Syria.

Ankara considers that Turkey's stability and prosperity are linked in the end to the emergence of a region that lives in the "stability and prosperity" policies, and where Turkey would have a primordial role. This has to pass by the removal of tension triggers, the most important of which is the injustice suffered by Palestinians, which was the incubator for the birth of extremism, extremists, and extremist policies. Ankara considers that the elimination of this injustice will contribute to the rehabilitation of some extremist and live forces to live according to the logic of stability and prosperity. This includes the Islamic forces that are also coming from the cloak of the "brothers", such as Hamas, and also includes forces coming from other sources, such as Hezbollah.

The policy of maturing the "live forces" with the hope of witnessing their integration and participation has clashed in the past years with the existence of an aggressive and shortsighted Israeli policy. Hence, Turkey's conviction with the necessity of curbing the Israeli role has increased, with the aim of pushing the Hebrew State to adopt realistic policies that correspond or are close to the logic of international legitimacy. It is why Erdogan went beyond anger. He used the principles of international legitimacy to practically say that the policies of Netanyahu's government have turned into a burden on Israel itself, the region, and its allies in the west, at the foremost of which is America - which is getting ready to withdraw from Iraq.

The aim behind this curbing process is not to extract the "tumor" that Ahmadinejad dreams of eliminating. It is certainly not throwing Israel into the sea like what some supporters of Erdogan's anger dream of doing. The aim is to turn the Israeli public opinion against the blind extremist government, and encourage Barack Obama's administration to exert effective pressures on Israel to curb its reckless and extremist policies and push it to the logic of negotiation and accepting peace and its costs.

Iran has tried in recent years to curtail Israel through the missile belt around it. It wanted to shake Israel's deterrence ability and notify Israeli citizens that they are within the reach of Hezbollah and Hamas rockets. Erdogan's weapons are different. He did not launch any missiles. He is attacking Israel with the language of international legitimacy and the requirements for stability and justice in the region.

While interpreting the current Turkish assault, one must not forget certain issues. Turkey did not say that it would sever its ties with Israel. It did not say it would leave the ranks of NATO or that it would remove its units that take part in missions in Afghanistan, the Balkans, and South Lebanon.

The Turkish attempt to curtail the State of Israel seems to be close in its objectives to the major Arab attempt to curtail Israel: the Arab peace initiative. What the initiative offers Israel is its acceptance as a normal state in the region if it withdraws from the occupied territories in 1967 and

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allows for the establishment of a Palestinian state whose capital would be East Jerusalem. The Arab attempt also focuses on the logic of international legitimacy. The Turkish perspective is almost the same, and it is what the current curtailing attempt aims for.

Putting Erdogan's storm at the service of peace requires an active American role and taking out the current Israeli government. It also requires curbing the emotions on the streets and avoiding to drown the storm in reckless practices.

### **The Leadership of the Palestinian Cause between Turkey and Iran Fri, 04 June 2010 Raghida Dergham**

Out of the Israeli brutality against civilians on board the flotilla in international waters, new realities emerged that may lead to radical solutions if the major players in the International Quartet acted wisely and boldly, and if the regional powers led by Egypt and Turkey understood well the opportunity to support Palestine without one-upmanship.

Israel has lost its mind in recent times as it is under extreme pressure that has shaken its confidence in its ability to plan strategies and draw in American support for them, as usual.

Iran, meanwhile, is concerned by Turkey's growing role, in particular when the flotilla, which exposed the Israeli brutality, sailed to Gaza in a bid to break the blockade under Turkish auspices, and humanitarian arbitrariness. This means that Turkey decided to reclaim the Palestinian cause from Shiite Iranian confiscation for the sake of the Sunni leadership. It also means that the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is engaging Iran on two fronts, one involving endorsement in the nuclear issue in order to allow Turkey into the talks among major powers in the Iranian issue. And the second front involves extracting the banner of the Palestinian cause from the Shiite powers represented first by Iran and second by Hezbollah.

In truth, Egypt's entry into these developments is remarkable and extremely noteworthy, whether in the current and near terms, or at the level of the balance of power in the region, as the Palestinian cause has become one of the instruments of political acumen and regional popular fervour.

Egypt opened the Rafah crossing 'until further notice', a measure that will benefit it both regionally and locally. For instance, Egypt paved the way for an Arab role on par with the Iranian-Turkish rivalry in what relates to the Palestinian cause. Also, Egypt is assessing whether the Rafah crossing into Gaza is also a crossing for it into voiding a domestic power crisis.

While Hamas might be the party that benefited most at present from the botched military assault against the Freedom Flotilla, Hamas will be more and more under scrutiny because the illegal Israeli blockade was in retaliation against Hamas's failure to restrain itself as a 'government', and its failure to restrain other Palestinian factions.

Moreover, the Palestinian National Authority (PA), too, will be under further scrutiny. If it should succeed in exploiting the international public opinion, which is angry at Israel's continued impunity, the PA might be able to rally concrete support around it, based on the strategy of enabling the

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Palestinians to build institutions up to establishing their independent state. Even the public opinion, in particular the Arab opinion, is under scrutiny. It is about time for it to refrain from emotional arbitrariness, to shoulder its responsibility in cautioning leaderships regarding the perils of their destructive games, and to become a truly constructive public opinion that is coherent, aware and persistent.

The main members of the Quartet, which consists of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations, are required today to play a different role than the previous ones characterized by hesitation and ornamental stances, and sometimes insulting stances because of their short-sightedness.

Today, the United Nations and its Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon must not suffice themselves with statements of condemnation and denunciation of the Israeli violations of international laws and norms, and of its disregard to repeated demands for lifting the blockade on Gaza. Today, it is time for greater boldness on the part of the United Nations in order to reassert the purview of international law and legitimacy, without hesitation, apology, fear or ambiguity. If Judge Richard Goldstone's report had fallen into the maze of politics and had thus lost its prerogative for immediate accountability, then the tragedy of the flotilla must present an opportunity for a new way for the United Nations to deal with violations against humanitarian and international laws.

In fact, an independent international investigation is necessary, especially when the Israeli internal investigations have always proven that they are a function of political calculations and balances, under the guise of national interests and security.

The United Nations must equip itself with a comprehensive dossier on the various Israeli violations, in order to reassert itself firmly and reliably when it challenges Israel and its impunity. This is a moral obligation on the United Nations and the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

The European Union in turn has a higher degree of responsibility, as it is required to take a serious stance toward Israel, in support of the United Nations and international legitimacy, and also in the context of holding Israel accountable for its violations, including the forgery and fraud in the assassination of a Hamas leader in Dubai earlier this year.

The means to protest this and which the governments and peoples of the European Union possess are numerous, including the means to break the blockade on Gaza as well as economic measures against Israel itself. The European aid to the Palestinian National Authority is generous and worthy of gratitude. However, if this aid aims at deflecting blameworthiness and avoiding bilateral and collective sanctions against Israel for fear of the latter and its lobby which threatens consequences for such sanctions, then it is better to reconsider. This is because the EU's seat in the Quartet places responsibilities on the former's shoulders that go beyond purchasing absolution by means of financial assistance. It is the duty of the European Union not to forget the moral, political, legal and legitimate element in this issue. In other words, it is the duty of Europe to stop hiding in plain sight.

Meanwhile, Russia is more evasive and equivocal towards the obligations of its membership in the Quartet. At times, Russia hides behind the 'sacrifice' of its role which was on par with that of the

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United States during the Cold War, and its acceptance instead of the American leadership when it comes to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And at other times, Russia gets involved in this issue on the basis of the needs of its regional relations with countries, organizations and factions.

In truth, Russia is fully capable of curbing war in the region, as well as the peace prevention tactics led by Iran and its allies.

Russia's duty today is thus to put pressure on Iran to stop using the Palestinian cause in Palestine and Lebanon for purposes that benefit the Islamic Republic in its regional and domestic standing, in a manner that fuels the possibilities of conflict, and on the basis of a strategy aimed at preventing the peace process from collapsing.

Russia considers itself to be a party in the peace process through its membership in the Quartet. If Iran is hindering peace, then Russia must use its influence unequivocally to stop that, as the bilateral relations between the two countries definitely allow Moscow to exert political and economic pressure.

In the meantime, the administration of Barack Obama is in the forefront of those required to put pressure on Israel today. What happened in international waters when the Israeli navy attacked the convoy of the peace activists, including Islamists, is that this unleashed global fury not only against Israel but also against the sponsors of the pampered state, i.e. the United States of America.

The international public opinion did not buy the Israeli justifications. Anger will grow, and will hinder other strategies pursued by the United States such as its bid to impose additional sanctions on Iran because of its violations of international resolutions and of the treaty on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Breaking the illegal blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza has become a nightmare to the government of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Defence Minister Ehud Barak that goes beyond the technicality of breaking the blockade. This would be defeating Israel and forcing it to do something it does not want to do: this time, through humanitarian activists and politicians in the aftermath of international pressures on Israel during the New York nuclear conference which pushed it to the edge.

What will happen in the upcoming days and weeks might indeed lead to the lifting of the blockade. However, this will not take place in a manner that opens crossing points to the flow of arms and fighters smuggled into Gaza. If that is what is in the minds of those who will attempt to capitalize on the peace flotilla to achieve their agenda, then those will not only be disappointed, but will also be harming and offending the Palestinians under occupation and under siege. Should they attempt to do so, they would be pulling the rug from under the feet of a unique opportunity to rally international support for lifting the blockade and for putting serious pressures on Israel.

Barack Obama's serious pressure on Israel, for instance, must translate into a serious plan for measures towards achieving peace. But in order for him to do so, it is useful for the Arab countries to be aware of how to exploit the international window of opportunity in a constructive manner,

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