

A Week of Tragedies. Britain's New Tory Government and the Gaza Freedom Flotilla

Open Letter to Prime Minister David Cameron.

By [Felicity Arbuthnot](#)

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#)

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The Prime Minister,

The Rt. Hon. David Cameron M.P.,

No 10 Downing Street.

Dear Prime Minister,

Last Wednesday, 2nd June, for reasons unknown, Derek Bird went on a shooting rampage in a quiet area of Britain's scenic Cumbria, killing twelve people and injuring others. You rightly responded by visiting survivors and those affected, in expression of solidarity and sympathy, with those bereaved and affected, in a tight knit community.

You expressed the bewilderment caused by the terrible, random killings as : "... so unfair and so cruel." The government, you said, "...needs to listen, show that it cares .. to answer questions that people have (been asking) quite legitimately, about these terrible events."

Two days before the Cumbria tragedy, twenty eight Britons were caught up in a "random act of killing", piracy, hi-jacking and kidnapping, on the ship Mavi Marmara, in an illegal act of enormity, on the high seas, in international waters. "Terrible events", indeed.

A known nine people were killed, though the number is thought to be higher. Up to sixty were injured, some seriously. The Britons, with six hundred and seventy eight others, from nearly forty countries, were abducted by armed personnel, from a total of six vessels.

All personal belongings, with money, cameras, laptops, film, notebooks, clothes, were stolen, as was the aid they were transporting and the vessels in which they were traveling. A crime of enormity, which Sabah Al Mukhtar, President of the Arab Lawyers Association states: " ... exactly fits the definition of piracy."

Daniel Machover, who is described in Chambers Guide to the Legal Profession as one whose: "... work in pursuing individuals accused of committing war crimes, torture and crimes against humanity across the world, has placed him at the forefront of the movement for universal criminal jurisdiction over the most serious human rights violations", is also unequivocal:

"Since the ship was flying a Turkish flag it was only subject to Turkish jurisdiction.

International law does provide that warships may interfere with the passage on the high seas of ships flying the flag of another State in limited circumstances. Article 22(1) of the 1958 Geneva High Seas Convention (which sets out customary international law, and to which Israel is a party):

“Except where acts of interference derive from powers conferred by treaty, a warship which encounters a foreign merchant ship on the high seas is not justified in boarding her unless there is a reasonable ground for suspecting:

- a. that the ship is engaged in piracy; or
- b. that the ship is engaged in the slave trade; or
- c. that, though flying a foreign flag or refusing to show its flag, the ship is, in reality, of the same nationality as the warship.”

These exceptions were not relevant in this incident in that none of these grounds existed and there was no reasonable basis on which any of these grounds could be suspected. 1. (My emphasis.) Clearly, last week, the world witnessed a crime of enormity.

In Cumbria, you expressed concern at those with “terrible facial injuries” and commented on their “bravery.” The killer, you learned, appeared to have deliberately aimed at the victims heads.

In an ironic coincidence, the British travellers also either suffered or witnessed such injuries – amongst other dreadful physical trauma injuries, and everyone involved, also exhibited extraordinary bravery, in the face of an unknown number of armed assailants.

The killers indisputedly – since autopsies have taken place of the dead and there are many eye witness reports – also “deliberately” aimed for passengers’ heads.

The victims, of course, were those taking aid to the illegally blockaded people of Gaza, suffering under an illegal collective punishment, described by the United Nations, as a “mediaeval siege.”

In the latter case, it is surely coincidental that Israel’s spokespeople, those of President Barack “Nobel” Obama, Middle East “Peace Envoy” Tony Blair expressed mere “regret”, as the world erupted – and the majority of its governments declared eloquently ballistic outrage – at what more than one described as act of “State terrorism.”

Incredibly, on Friday, 4th June, another vessel transporting aid, the Rachel Corrie, named after another of Israel’s Forces civilian victims, was also subject to another act of piracy. On board were distinguished passengers, including a former UN Under-Secretary General, a Nobel Peace Prize winner (who actually deserved hers for many acts of courage.) The Malaysian-Irish sponsored vessel also had on board a distinguished author and journalists and an eminent politician, list attached. 2.

The 1200-ton Rachel Corrie, was purchased through a special fund set up by former Malaysian Prime Minister and Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO) chairman Tun Dr.

Mahathir Mohamad, and owned by The Free Gaza Movement. Its cargo included hundreds of tons of medical equipment and cement, as well as 20 tons of paper from the people of Norway, donated to UN-run schools in Gaza.

Your Foreign Secretary, William Hague expressed “disappointment” at lack of access to, or even names of those held or hospitalised. Relatives of those involved, publicly accused the Foreign Office of less than helpfulness and even of “obstruction.” You both are declared Conservative Friends of Israel. If one is known by one’s friends, as the saying goes, this government is not off to a glittering start.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, did a weak best at censure toward Israel, blowing it by his ridiculous caveat, relating to a flotilla of aid, including toys, crutches, wheelchairs and marbles, that: “ ... of course, Israel has every right to defend itself and its citizens from any attack.” Mr Clegg is another who seems to have lost his own marbles.

However, it can only be hoped that some weird beaurocratic blip overtook the new boys at the helm of the Ship of State, and that the you will speedily show equal support and concern for victims of an act of brigandry, arguably unparalleled, by a nation which prides itself on being “democratic” – inspite of a sixty two year rampage around the Middle East, wreaking untold death, destruction and misery, still delusionally repeating: “We are the only democratic country in the Middle East.”

In January, last year, at the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Turkey’s Prime Minister Erdogan was described as “storming out”, in both sorrow and anger, after telling Israeli President, Shimon Peres: “You are killing people.”

Ironically, these outrages on the high seas, have happened just days before the June 8th, anniversary of the destruction by Israel of the USS Liberty, with the loss of two hundred lives. One of the survivors, of that outrage, was Jo Meadows, who was again attacked by Israel at sea, as a passenger on the Mavi Marmara.

Whilst contributions to the Conservative Party coffers might drop a bit, surely government policy towards Israel should be in line with that toward any country which behaves outside all the legal norms. Your election slogans were: “Time for Change.” Indeed.

Incidentally, the surviving passengers, kidnapped at gunpoint and taken to Israel, a country where they had never intended going, were required to sign documents stating they had entered the country illegally. George Orwell truly lives.

And the British Navy’s patrolling against piracy off Somalia, seems somewhat misplaced.

I await your response with interest, but little hope.

Yours sincerely,

Felicity Arbuthnot

1. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=19577>

2. LIST OF PASSENGERS ABOARD MV RACHEL CORRIE.

*Mairead Maguire 66 Belfast, Ireland

Mairead Maguire is a Nobel Peace Laureate (1976) and Co-founder of Peace People, Northern Ireland. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work for peace and a nonviolent solution to the Ethnic/political conflict in Northern Ireland. Mairead has travelled many times to the occupied territories of Palestine to support the nonviolent peoples' movement for Human Rights, International Law, and Self Determination of the Palestinian people. Maguire was shot with a plastic bullet whilst participating with Palestinians/Israelis/Internationals in a peaceful protest March to the Wall in Bilin, in April, 2007. Mairead went on the maiden Voyage of Dignity in October, 2008, the second successful voyage for the Free Gaza Movement. She was also on Board 'Spirit' when Israel hijacked the Boat in International Waters, taking all 21 humanitarian passengers to Israel, where they were arrested, detained for a week in an Israeli prison and then deported.

*Denis Halliday, Manhattan, NYC and Connemara, Ireland.

Denis Halliday was UN Assistant Secretary-General from 1994-98. Appointed by SG Boutros Ghali, he served as ASG UN Human Resources Management in New York and in mid 1997 to end 1998 as Head, Humanitarian Programme in Iraq to support the Iraqi people struggling under the genocidal impact of UN Sanctions.

Prior to that, as a development manager, Halliday served UNDP from 1964-94 in Iran, New York Hqts, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Samoa, New York again and finally as head of the UNDP Regional Office in Thailand

Since resigning from the UN in 1998, Halliday has delivered numerous parliamentary briefings, provided extensive media inputs and has given public/university lectures on Iraq, human rights, and the UN, in particular its reform. He was a visiting professor at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania and teaches/speaks inter alia at universities in Ireland, Canada, UK and USA. Halliday is a graduate of TCD, has an honorary Phd, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and was awarded the UK Gandhi Peace Prize.

*Matthias Chang Wen Chieh 60, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia . Matthias Chang is a Malaysian of Chinese descent. He is a Barrister of 32 years standing and once served as the Political Secretary to the Fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

He is the author of three bestsellers, "Future FastForward", "Brainwashed for War, Programmed to Kill", and "The Shadow Money-Lenders and the Global Financial Tsunami", published in the US and in Malaysia. Since his student days in England in the late 1960s, he was and still is, actively involved in the anti-war movement spanning a period of 41 years. He is a Catholic but enjoins all to promote inter-faith understanding.

*MP Mohd Nizar bin Zakaria is a Member of the Malaysian Parliament.

*Shamsul Akmar bin Musa Kamal 46 , Selangor, Malaysia

*Mr. Shamsul Akmar bin Musa Kamal is a journalist for over two decades, Columnist for The New Straits Times and The Star newspapers and is currently the Special Officer to Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the Fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia. He holds a Masters Degree in War Studies from King's College, University of London.

*Mohd Nizar bin Zakaria 41 , Perak, Malaysia

*Abdul Halim Bin Mohamed 29 , Selangor, Malaysia

*Abdul Halim is a broadcast journalist for news and current affairs Malaysia TV3

*Mohd Jufri Bin Mohd Judin 33, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Mohd Jufri is a cameraman for news and current affairs Malaysia TV3.

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