

Breaking the Siege against Gaza: We must End the Apartheid and Establish an Independent Palestine State

By [Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad](#)

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Honourable speakers, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly I would like to welcome all of you to this conference on the siege organised by the Perdana Global Peace Organisation backed by UMNO.

1. We are gathered here today not only to honour the Turkish martyrs who were brutally slaughtered by Israeli commandos on the Mavi Marmara, but also to counter the lies and propaganda by Israel and the Zionist controlled international mass media, that the passengers, specifically the martyrs, were terrorists and therefore the killings were justified.

2. More importantly, we must send a message of hope and solidarity to the Palestinians that the peace loving peoples of the world will never abandon them, come what may and that we will stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their struggle for liberation and for the State of Palestine.

3. Prime Minister Netanyahu has openly and unreservedly declared just a few days ago that Israel will not apologise for the brutal murders committed in international waters in contravention of all conventions and international laws because Israel was justified in the massacre of unarmed people in order to defend Israeli security.

4. Netanyahu said in an interview with Israel's Channel 1:

"Israel cannot apologise for our soldiers being forced to defend themselves against the mob that almost slaughtered them."

Yet, not one single Israeli commando was killed. In fact, from the testimony of Ken O'Keefe, a passenger on Mavi Marmara, which we have just witnessed from the multi-media presentation, it was the well-armed commandos who killed and injured the passengers. Far from killing or attempting to kill the commandos, despite their friends being killed, the Turkish passengers managed to disarm three of the commandos and after a doctor had washed away the blood caused by their faces being scratched, released them. Is this the behaviour of a mob bent on slaughtering the commandos?

5. In a speech to the Israeli parliament, Netanyahu elaborated:

“They want to strip us of the natural right to defend ourselves. When we defend ourselves against rocket attack, we are accused of war crimes. We cannot board sea vessels when our soldiers are being attacked and fired upon, because that is a war crime.”

6. But where is the evidence that the Israeli commandos were being attacked and fired upon? Such is the distortion of the truth! Even the UN Report chaired by Justice Robert Goldstone, a Zionist and a Jew who found that the Israelis committed war crimes when it invaded Gaza in 2008, was dismissed as mere propaganda, and the said report was not allowed to be tabled and debated in the U.N.

7. Self-defence can take place if there was an attempt at attacking or when actually attacked by the aggressor. Even the Israelis said that the passengers were armed with iron rods (railings) and scissors. Is Israel suggesting that people with scissors and iron railings attacked the fully armed commandos before they boarded the Mavi Marmara? It was to defend themselves after the commandos dropped from the helicopters and killed their friends that the unarmed passengers tried to defend themselves with scissors and iron railings, the only weapons they could lay hands on.

8. However, even without an Independent Inquiry and in spite of the fact that Israel had confiscated and destroyed incriminating videos of the massacre, the international mass media cannot ignore the overwhelming evidence provided by the survivors of Mavi Marmara – journalists and passengers who were able to evade the tight security measures and brought out videos showing that Israeli commandos had commenced firing at the passengers before boarding the Mavi Marmara. IHH, the organisers of the Mavi Marmara has just come out with their report and I am told that this is available in CD for all delegates.

9. Additionally, we cannot ignore the fact that the intent to attack the Freedom Flotilla was made well before the flotilla set sail for Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defence Minister Ehud Barak declared that Israeli naval ships and commandos would be conducting naval exercises to prepare for the eventual attack on the flotilla and that Israel would do everything possible to prevent the flotilla from reaching Gaza. This was reported by Bloomberg, the Associated Press and even Israeli newspapers, and was affirmed by the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren in an interview on June 2nd, 2010.

10. It came as no surprise that on 31st May 2010, in contravention of international laws, Israeli commandos as directed by the Israeli regime boarded the Mavi Marmara, and in the process shot and killed nine passengers and wounded many more and hijacked the entire flotilla to the port of Ashdod in Israel.

11. Rifat Audeh, a passenger on the Mavi Marmara gave an account of what happened before Israeli commandos boarded the Mavi Marmara. She said:

“The Israeli military was firing at us from their vessels which approached the sides of our ship and the helicopters from above as well, even before a single soldier landed on deck. Here we had fully armed Israeli commandos firing live rounds, tear gas, sound grenades and other types of ammunition at unarmed activists of a humanitarian ship at night in international waters, and once again the media has criminalised us and vindicated the perpetrators. Let me be clear: we had every right to defend ourselves and our ship against this illegal barbaric assault as our brothers were being wounded and killed.”

12. Just as Israel denied using white phosphorous and other banned weapons on the civilians of Gaza in the barbaric invasion in 2008 and the massacre of civilians in Jenin in

2003 until exposed by the Robert Goldstone report and independent observers respectively, Israel is denying again and hopes that this time, the war crimes would be lost with the passage of time.

13. But peace loving nations of the world condemned this wanton aggression and demanded that the siege of Gaza be lifted and a U.N. sanctioned Inquiry be established to investigate into the massacre of the passengers on the Mavi Marmara.

14. Knowing that the United States will not condemn its actions and veto any Security Council resolutions that demanded a full account for the incident, Israel ignored international condemnation and maintained that she has the right to do as she likes. Israel considers itself above international laws and common moral values.

15. his heinous murder of Turkish nationals and the confiscation of the Turkish ship, Mavi Marmara seemed strange to many, as Turkey has been a close strategic ally of Israel for many years, having regular joint military exercises and shared strategic interests. Turkey is also a NATO member. However, it is evident that even an ally would not be spared the criminal behaviour of Israel whether there is justification or not.

16. Such is Israel's arrogance and her confidence that she can get away with murder. And indeed Israel has been getting away with blatant murder since 1948.

17. Many may have forgotten that such betrayal by Israel of an ally is not without precedent. The ally that was previously betrayed by Israel was none other than the United States. That treachery needs to be retold, if we want to understand and appreciate the strategic implications of the attack on Mavi Marmara.

18. It was on the 8th of June, 1967, soon after the commencement of the six-day war by Israel against her Arab neighbours. President Johnson had given his consent to Israel to launch a limited war against Egypt on the condition that Israel would not widen the war to include any land grab against Jordan and Syria.

19. Egypt had closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships and the limited war was to compel Egypt to reopen the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships. But, the then Defence Minister Moshe Dayan had different ideas from what was agreed between President Johnson and the then prime minister of Israel, Levi Eshkol and his military Chief of Staff, General Yizhak Rabin. Moshe Dayan, the one-eyed war criminal wanted to use the opportunity to extend the borders of Israel to fulfil the aspirations of the Zionists for a "Greater Israel." It was in the plan that after the capture of the Sinai Peninsula, Israeli military would be diverted to the Jordanian and Syrian fronts.

20. The USS Liberty was a "spy ship" and its mission was to listen to all Israel's military communications so that Israel would abide by the agreement not to widen the war after she attacked Egypt.

21. The USS Liberty clearly stood in the way, as President Johnson would know through communication intercepts by the USS Liberty, if Israel reneged on its agreement for a limited war, and proceeded to wage a full scale war against all her immediate neighbours. Time was of the essence. If the USS Liberty was disabled, Israel would by her surprise attack against Syria and Jordan achieve her aims of a Greater Israel before President Johnson could intervene to stop the wider war.

22. General Moshe Dayan therefore ordered the attack on the USS Liberty that left 34 Americans dead and 175 wounded and severely damaged the ship. The captain of a nearby US aircraft carrier scrambled jet fighters to assist the USS Liberty but his orders were countermanded by President Johnson and Defence Secretary Robert McNamara. The excuse for the attack was that Israel made a mistake as to the identity of the USS Liberty. Moshe Dayan hailed the day of the attack, 8th June 1967 as a "Great Day" because the destruction of USS Liberty enabled Israel to extend its borders to encompass the Golan Heights and the entire West Bank and more! The fact that President Johnson had to cover up the murder of his own soldiers and accepted thereafter the fait accompli of a Greater Israel shows all too clearly that the United States was and is still subservient to Israel.

23. The international mass media propaganda at the material time accused the Arab states for starting the war and wanting to annihilate Israel. Once again, we have to ask, who is telling the truth?

24. We need only to examine some public statements of Israel's military leaders at the given time. On 28th February 1968, Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Chief of Staff in an interview with Le Monde, conceded that:

"I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions which he sent to Sinai on 14th May would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it."

Menachem Begin, then Minister without Portfolio was quoted by the New York Times in 1982 as saying:

"In June 1967, we had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."

25. Given this hidden agenda, how did Israel prepare the propaganda for war against the Arabs? The strategy was simple enough – portray Israel as the victim. In an interview with Al-Hamishmar in 1971, Mordecai Bentove, then Minister of Housing revealed:

"The entire story of the danger of extermination was invented in every detail and exaggerated a posteriori to justify the annexation of new Arab territory."

26. This deliberate lie was corroborated by General Haim Barlev, Chief of General Staff Branch, Israel Defence Forces and as reported by the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv in 1972. I quote:

"We were not threatened with genocide on the eve of the six-day war, and we had never thought of such a possibility."

General Chaim Herzog, Commanding General and first Military Governor of Israeli Occupied West Bank expressed similar views when he said:

"There was no danger of annihilation. Israeli headquarters never believed in this danger. "

27. From these facts we can draw the following conclusions, namely:

a) Israel treats her allies no different from her enemies if its interests are threatened.

b) It is by deception and outright lies, that Israel wages war.

28. Not for nothing is, “by way of deception” the motto of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence unit. The attack against the Turkish ship and the Turks is thus typical of the Israelis. They knew and yet they shot to kill the Turks with live bullets. Given this sordid history, it comes as no surprise that President Obama chose to express regrets instead of condemnation of the murder of the nine passengers, one of whom was an American citizen of Turkish descent. He was only nineteen years old. Tony Blair, the war criminal and the so-called Special Peace Envoy for the Quartet for the Middle East declared that Israel was acting in self-defence when it attacked the passenger ship Mavi Marmara and hijacked the entire flotilla to the port of Ashdod.

A question remains to be answered – Did President Obama know in advance of the attack on Mavi Marmara and give his consent just as President Johnson did when Israel attacked Egypt in 1967 in the six-day war?

29. It is inconceivable that the intelligence services of the United States were unaware of such plans by the Israeli military. The President of the United States is briefed daily by the intelligence services. And given the special relationship between Israel and the United States, it would be naive to think that Israel would not share intelligence regarding what they consider their mutual security interests. In the just concluded visit by Netanyahu to the White House, the prime minister remarked that:

“There is a depth and richness of this relationship that is expressed every day. Our teams talk. We don’t make it public... What is not told is the fact we have an enduring bond of values, interests, beginning with security and the way we share both information and other things to help the common defence of our common interests. The President said it best in his speech in Cairo. He said it in front of the entire Islamic world, he said, the bond between Israel and the United States is unbreakable. And I can affirm that to you today.”

30. Yet, the Muslim world continues to be taken in by President Obama’s rhetoric that he is committed to change and he is for peace. His actions contradict his spoken words, for upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, President Obama then escalated the war in Afghanistan, a war started by President GW Bush. It is not surprising that the UN chose not to allow a debate on Malaysia’s resolution condemning Israel for its dastardly acts.

31. Given this reaffirmation by President Obama and Netanyahu, we must not be deluded into believing that there will be peace, genuine peace in the Middle East anytime soon. On the contrary, war preparations are in place. The same lies have been repeated. Have we not heard the same refrain, that Israel’s very existence is threatened by her neighbours? A thief shouting thief as he runs away with the booty is a most effective way of deflecting focus on his thieving. That is Israel’s strategy.

32. Iraq was accused of having weapons of mass destruction so as to appear to be a threat to Israel’s existence. Israel demanded that Iraq be invaded and its people subjugated. And so in 2003, Iraq was invaded. But as we now know Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. Iraq was attacked because the plans for the invasion of Iraq were laid much earlier. In 1996, the then prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu commissioned the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies to prepare a blue print to enable Israel to be the dominant regional power in the Middle East. The report, A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm sets out the new paradigm for Israel. According to its authors, the centerpiece of the recommendations was the removal of Saddam Hussein as the first step in

remaking the Middle East into a region friendly to Israel. Their plan also signaled a radical departure from the peace-oriented policies of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a member of an extreme right-wing Israeli group.

33. One of the pillars of this new policy was the abandonment of the “comprehensive peace” with the entire Arab world. Israel’s new strategy would be to work jointly with Jordan and Turkey to “contain, destabilise, and roll-back” those entities that were regarded as threats to all three (i.e. Israel, Turkey and Jordan), firstly by destroying Iraq and then Syria and finally Iran. This is the significance of Turkey in the overall scheme of Netanyahu under the “Clean Break” master plan.

34. Now that Iraq and Saddam Hussein have been disposed, the target has shifted to Iran as Syria is seen to be a lesser threat. The world is made to believe once again the lie that Israel’s existence is being threatened by a nuclear armed Iran, notwithstanding that El Baradie, the former head of the IAEA had repeatedly stated that there is no evidence that Iran has a nuclear weapons program. President Bush had threatened Iran with tactical nuclear weapons. President Obama is no different for he has said that “all options are on the table” in confronting Iran.

35. And once again, the United States at the instigation of Israel has compelled the UN Security Council to impose crippling sanctions to weaken the resolve of the Iranians to resist Israel’s aggressive designs. We can observe a pattern in the war preparations from recent examples, namely Iraq and Gaza. Broad sanctions were imposed on Iraq and Gaza to starve and weaken the people before the military invasion in 2003 and 2008 respectively. If the past is a precedent, then it is a matter of time before the war criminals in Israel and the United States launch another war of aggression, once Iran has been weakened by sanctions.

36. However, Israel may have miscalculated the willingness of Turkey to be a partner in its grand design to contain Iran and Syria as envisaged in the Clean Break blue print. As it stands at the present moment, the encirclement of Iran – Afghanistan in the East, occupied Iraq in the West and Turkey in the North rests on shaky foundations. But this may not deter the warmongers from attempting to fulfill their design for a “New Middle-East”. There is already a map showing how the Middle East would be carved out to serve Israel’s strategic interests.

37. It is left to be seen whether Israel’s blood lust for wars of conquest can be accomplished without Turkey as part of the equation as stipulated in the Clean Break blue print. Turkey has demanded that Israel apologise for the brutal murder of its nationals, failing which Turkey would sever diplomatic relations with Israel. Presently, Turkey has ceased all military collaboration with Israel and a few days ago had declared that Israeli military planes are no longer allowed to enter Turkey’s airspace. It is early to say whether these are temporary misalignments or potential major paradigm shifts in the foreign policy of Turkey.

38. The recent actions of prime minister Erdogan provide grounds for hope that the forces for peace can forge a broad alliance to isolate Israel and thwart its grand design to wage wars of aggression to establish a Greater Israel and to be the undisputed regional power. The public dressing down of Shimon Peres, the President of Israel at the World Economic Forum by premier Erdogan was unprecedented as even the President of the United States has not dared to rebuke publicly any Israeli leaders.

39. It is in the context of this geopolitical matrix that we must applaud the courageous

leadership of Prime Minister Erdogan in supporting the efforts of IHH peace activists on board the Mavi Marmara as part of the Freedom Flotilla to break the siege of Gaza. The supreme sacrifice by the nine Turkish peace activists will not be in vain, as by their deaths, the true nature of the Zionist regime, its barbarity and ugliness has been laid bare before the world:

Israel is...

A brutal regime that has no respect for international law;

A brutish regime that has no qualms in murdering unarmed civilians on a humanitarian mission;

A brutish regime that has created the largest open prison in the world, the enslavement of 1.5 million people within its borders, through blockade and economic sanctions of Gaza;

A brutish regime that brainwashes its young to be mindless killers of unarmed civilians, men, women and children;

A brutish regime that practices apartheid.

A brutish regime that wages wars through deception and lies.

A brutish regime that practices and fosters state terrorism.

40. When the Perdana Global Peace Organisation visited Cyprus in July 2009 to collaborate with the activists of the free Gaza Movement, we did not expect that our idea of a flotilla of cargo ships and passenger boats manned by volunteers from all over the world would have such an impact on the conscience of world leaders who before had stood aloof and cared not for the sufferings of the Palestinians. Following the invasion of Gaza in December 2008, more than 1,400 civilians, men, women and children, in fact mainly children were slaughtered, over 20,000 homes were destroyed, schools and hospitals were levelled to the ground. Many countries pledged billions in aid, but the pledges were not translated into concrete action to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinians in Gaza. It was hypocrisy at its very worst.

41. While world leaders turned their backs on Gaza, peace activists the world over came together to challenge the might of Israel and expose their crimes. George Galloway started the Viva Palestina Land Convoy which smashed the land blockade and brought hundreds of truckloads of aid to Gaza. The Free Gaza Movement had more humble beginnings. They started by sending small fishing boats to break the sea blockade. On one occasion, their boat was rammed and the volunteers were thrown into the sea to drown. On another occasion, fully armed Israeli commandos boarded their boat, The Spirit of Humanity and hijacked it to Israel. The world took scant notice of these happenings.

42. We realised that small fishing boats would not do and that a flotilla of cargo ships and passenger boats would be needed to challenge Israel's navy. And as they say, the rest is history. Malaysia's contribution in this effort was the purchase of a cargo ship and two passenger boats, the former named after the courageous American peace activist Rachel Corrie who was crushed to death by an Israel Defence Forces (IDF) bulldozer when she acted as a human shield to prevent the demolition of Palestinian homes in 2003. She gave her life so that others could live in freedom and with dignity. Her country had forgotten her, but we

were moved by her determination and sacrifice to free the Palestinians.

43. Imbued with the spirit of Rachel Corrie, our Irish colleagues – Jenny and Derek Graham nurtured and brought back to life the abandoned cargo ship MV Linda and appropriately renamed her MV Rachel Corrie. The ship was abandoned by her owners and was auctioned for 70,000 Euros. She set sail for Gaza on 14th May and immediately encountered problems. She had a broken propeller shaft and had to dock for repairs. She could not join the flotilla in time and so the flotilla led by the Mavi Marmara set sail for Gaza.

44. Following her repairs, the Rachel Corrie, determined as ever, headed for Gaza. On board were five Irish volunteers Derek and Jenny Graham and my good friend Denis Halliday, the former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations as well as the Nobel Peace Laureate, Mairead McGuire. There were six Malaysians, two representatives from the Perdana Global Peace Organisation, a Member of Parliament, a volunteer from the Ministry of Information and two TV3 journalists.

45. Rachel Corrie was all alone, sailing at a mere 8 knots but she never waived in her resolve to reach Gaza. After the massacre of the nine Turkish nationals on board the Mavi Marmara, massive disinformation was initiated against Rachel Corrie. It was rumoured that she had turned tail and headed back for Ireland. Another report stated that she was heading for the safe haven of Cyprus and might even head for Turkey. This propaganda was made notwithstanding that the Captain and his crew together with all the activists on board had declared in a press statement that in honour of the martyrs they were more determined than ever to sail towards Gaza and bring badly needed aid, comprising of cement, medicine and equipment, toys and educational materials.

46. Knowing that Israel had just massacred nine passengers and wounded many more and that Israeli commandos may act similarly, Rachel Corrie and her passengers were not deterred and were ready to face Israeli brutality. Israel deployed four naval ships, two fast patrol boats and six zodiacs to intercept and hijack the Rachel Corrie to Israel. This was an act of cowardice by the Israelis – to deploy naval ships and armed commandos to hijack a small cargo ship with unarmed passengers and crew. By this single act of defiance, Rachel Corrie exposed Israeli cowardice to the world.

47. This is but a beginning in our collective efforts to bring peace to the long suffering Palestinians. Israel under tremendous international pressure declared that it would be easing the blockade and would allow more aid to enter Gaza. Israel must take us for fools to believe in her lies.

48. Let us not forget that Netanyahu is the prime minister of Israel, the same man who in 1996 commissioned the blue print, the Clean Break which rejected a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and opted for war – to be precise the destruction of Iraq, Iran and Syria so as to impose peace on its own terms. The present policy of Israel is but the continuation of the strategies laid down in that blue print.

49. Israel has succeeded in destroying Iraq and emboldened by this success is now moving to the next phase of the blue print, the destruction of Iran. The time tested modus operandi of imposing harsh sanctions followed by a vicious invasion has already started. In the just concluded visit to the White House, Netanyahu made the following remarks at the joint press conference with President Obama. He said with regard to sanctions on Iran:

"I think the sanctions the President signed the other day actually have teeth. They bite. The question is – how much do you need to bite is something I cannot answer now. But if other nations adopt similar sanctions, that would increase the effect."

50. Let us be very clear. Sanctions amount to laying siege, to starve and weaken the enemy. It pays to remind ourselves of what Dov Weisglass, an Israeli aid to Prime Ministers, said of sanctions;

"The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet but not to make them die of hunger."The invasion would meet with little resistance after that. This is the US' and Israeli strategy. It is a strategy based on cowardice.

51. But in spite of two years of sanctions against Gaza before the preceding invasion of December 2008 an invasion which lasted until mid-January 2009, the Gazans withstood the siege. The Palestinians were not so easily cowed.

52. Hence the blockade of food and medicine. It is not about preventing arms from reaching Gaza. The blockade of the food, medicine and cement convoy is about weakening the people of Gaza for the next orgy of slaughter. Israel and the United States have no intention to see a Palestinian State and for the Palestinians to live side by side with the Israelis. Netanyahu has not said since becoming the prime minister of Israel that he has abandoned the Clean Break blue print, and neither has President Obama demanded that he should.

53. The warmongers continue to propagate that the ideological enemy of the West is Islam and the Zionist controlled mass media have not ceased their efforts to demonise Muslims. In the circumstances, the path for all of us, the peace loving people of the world, is clear. We must be vigilant and be prepared to resist any attempt by the warmongers to unleash another war, be it with Iran, Syria and or any other country.

54. We must pursue with greater vigour our efforts to criminalise war. War is mass killing, is massacre and must be made a crime. It is heartening to note that recently, the International Criminal Court is also of the view that war of aggression is a crime, but the United States under the present leadership of President Obama opposed vehemently this noble initiative. So once again, we are being confronted with the inevitable conclusion – there is no change, the status quo remains and for these leaders war is their preferred option.

55. In the circumstances, we must strive to create a broad coalition for peace and to expose and resist the grand designs of these warmongers. Rachel Corrie and Mavi Marmara have shown the way. The NGOs and the volunteers have cleared the path. We must build on this momentum and surge forward. We must call upon all governments not to be hypocritical and stand up to this rogue State called Israel.

56. Israel cannot be allowed to continue in its present path and exist as an Apartheid state. Just as the world would not stand for a White South Africa, it should also not allow an apartheid state to continue its oppression of the Palestinians. We will struggle for as long as it takes.

We will break the siege.

Palestine will be liberated from Israeli oppression.

Thank you.

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