

Final Freedom Flotilla boat raided by Israeli commandos

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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On Tuesday, July 19, elite troops from Israel's Shayetet 13 naval commando unit intercepted and boarded the last remaining Freedom Flotilla II vessel carrying aid and justice activists to Gaza. They encountered no resistance, and directed the French boat Dignité-Al Karama to the Israeli port of Ashdod, where the activists were processed by immigration authorities. According to a report by Haaretz journalist Amira Hass, the Israeli Navy began trailing the Dignité-Al Karama when it was some 50 miles from Gaza. The boat was asked to state its final destination and disclose if there were any weapons on board. The activists — from France, Canada, Greece, Sweden and Tunisia — informed the Navy that there were no weapons, and that they were heading to the port of Gaza. When they refused to change course despite Navy orders to do so, the Israeli commando boarded the boat.

Dignité-Al Karama had left the Greek island of Kastellorizo at around 8:30 p.m. local time on Saturday July 16, heading south. Those aboard had told Greek authorities that they were heading for Alexandria, Egypt, so that the authorities would not prevent them from leaving. According to a statement published by their Canadian counterparts, the 10 passengers aboard Dignité-Al Karama viewed themselves as representatives of the entire Freedom Flotilla II. The other flotilla boats — including Canada's Tahrir — have all been detained in Greek ports, on the instructions of Greek PM George Papandreou, at the behest of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We are sad to hear that the last of this Gaza aid flotilla's boats has been intercepted, but we are confident that there will be other challenges to this illegal and cruel blockade," says Thomas Woodley, President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME). CJPME urges Canadian MPs to press Israel to lift the blockade, noting that it constitutes collective punishment, which is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention. CJPME believes that Israel's concerns about potential weapon smuggling into Gaza can best be addressed by having neutral third parties inspect ships.

Canada's Tahrir ("liberation" in Arabic) was raided July 4 by the Greek coast guard four nautical miles out of the port of Agios Nikolaos, Crete, while it was making a surprise run for open sea. It was carrying \$300,000 worth of medical supplies, and dozens of social justice activists from Canada and other countries. Days later, in view of their immobilization by Greek authorities, the Tahrir participants suspended their current attempt to reach Gaza by sea from Greek ports.

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