

# Flotilla to Gaza: “A Battle for the High Seas. And the High Ground”

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If you're hoping to see news about the extraordinary events taking place in the Med sea around Cyprus on either the BBC or Sky this weekend. Forget it. For now. Despite the fact that almost three dozen Brits are amongst the 700 brave souls heading to Gaza on a fleet of ships laden with essential aid. Or the incredible military and political manoeuvrings surrounding Israel's response to the peaceful attempt, major news channels in the West remain silent. This despite the fact their news editors have the direct numbers of spokespeople on board and access to the live news feed.

After calls to newsrooms across the UK it is clear to me that the first ever sea bound fleet of international aid to Palestine is not of itself a big enough story for our media – until it fails. On Israel's terms. The BBC has been taking some 200 calls in an hour from viewers wanting news of the mission – to no avail. So what's going on?

The news agenda has been decided in advance that's what. Dictated by the well oiled Israeli propaganda machine being nothing if not helpful to all tiers for foreign press right now.

I speak to Greta Berlin, in Cyprus, an organiser of the Freegaza Movement about the BBC's attitude that 'nothing is happening.' She tells me 'I just got off the phone with the BBC in Jerusalem. They want to send a camera crew to Ashdod. It was all I could do to tell them they will be in the wrong place!!'

Ashdod. Yes you guessed it; the port in 'Israel' where, its military have previously towed Freegaza boats and where now makeshift detention centres are supposedly waiting for the activists of the Freedom Fleet.

Right now, the flotilla teams from Turkey, Ireland, Sweden and beyond are battling all kinds of last minute difficulties. As Israel has been busy with its own 'goodwill' campaign. At an impromptu press conference given by the army department in charge of supposedly delivering goods into Gaza, the message was simple; 'the flotilla is unnecessary as there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza.' Journalists have been taken on a tour of the Karem Abu Salem crossing, virtually the only crossing into Gaza that goods still pass through. Fact sheets handed to journalists outlining the 'thousands of tonnes of food' that enters the strip each year. The problem being with these impressively large looking numbers is that nowhere was there, a handy graph of what is 'allowed' in to feed the 1.8million Palestinians of Gaza and what is actually needed by the malnourished populace.

According to the army 156,000 tonnes of food has been delivered in the last six months. That's roughly 4kg per Gazan per week. A tiny amount compared to what you and I get through, but far, far worse is the quality of the crap that Israel pours into the region. The

kind of fizzy drinks, low vitamin junk food that if eaten on its own, without the requisite fruit and veg for a healthy diet- still leads the consumer to be malnourished.

But let's get back to the fleet of ships and Israel's devil and the deep blue sea, moment.

Some of you may believe that rather like the infamous London football supporters of Millwall, Israel's regime is happy to inhabit the world stage with the political equivalent of the chant 'nobody likes us we don't care doo dah doo dah!' In fact nothing could be farther from the truth. For like all bullies the Zionist regime is agonised by dislike. It simply cannot stand not to be loved. Altogether 'Ahhh.'

It asks us time and again as it attacks unarmed villagers in the West Bank and school children in Gaza, to believe that as a state, Israel denounces violence and acts in a controlled military manner, purely (indeed solely) for self defence. Understand this core system of lies and you will understand the current complex machinations the Israeli government is undertaking to avoid an armed stand off with the Freedom Fleet tomorrow or Monday. A stand off it is however, fully in preparation to win. The Israeli navy, the fifth most powerful and heavily armed on the planet, is itching to blow the Turkish led fleet out of the water. Its comrades onland would just love to duff up and arrest all those onboard. What they don't want is the bad press this would get them in this post Goldstone world. So. What to do?

Israel has said it is determined to intercept and search the vessels, then tow them to an Israeli port.

Israel has prepared a makeshift detention center in its southern port of Ashdod, and officials have said the activists sailing on the ships face deportation or arrest.

"We will not let this flotilla get through. It harms Israeli security," Israel TV's Channel 10 quoted Ayalon as saying.

The ground work then has been laid for a violent boarding of the vessels in international waters. Ground work to allow its idiot supporters to say, it didn't want such a thing and tried to avoid it. Thus, Israel's deputy foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, reiterated Saturday that the ships would be intercepted, denouncing the sea convoy as a 'provocation and violation of maritime laws'.

Still, the aid convoy poses a serious dilemma that was debated at the highest levels of the Israeli government this week.

Scenes of Israeli naval commandos taking over vessels with aid shipments and detaining high-profile activists would further harm Israel's image. This must be balanced with the determination in Tel Aviv to avoid setting a precedent and eroding the blockade by letting the vessels dock in Gaza.

Back to this weekends events. Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Ministry Director General Yossi Gal held a round of pressurised calls with foreign ministers from countries whose citizens are participating in the flotilla, and also with foreign diplomats on Thursday.

ON entering waters near Cyprus the fleet were disappointed, though unsurprised to find themselves turned away by the port authorities. Yet they need to both refuel and pick up

important VIP passengers for the final leg to Gaza. The complex system of alliances and counter-alliances of the Middle East has been used by Israel's diplomatic team to good effect. It is unclear if it will be terminal to the mission as yet.

The Cypriot government did not allow smaller boats to carry the group to the flotilla. Organizers must now find a way to have two dozen would-be passengers, including 19 European legislators and an elderly Holocaust survivor, to join the ships anchored in international waters off the island. Greta Berlin said; 'our two passenger boats have had mechanical problems under suspicious circumstances, both are now out of order- at the same time and pretty much in the same place. They are unable to go'. Mossad dark ops yet again in operation.

Last week an Israeli government source quoted in the regional press said "Israel will try to pick off the boats before they even join the flotilla." Success!

Their second success is that according to my latest news from Cyprus, Hedy Epstein, the wonderful, brave, lady in her eighties whose parents died in the Holocaust will now not make the journey.

Success two for Israel.

Authorities in Cyprus have been amazingly upfront in admitting their reasons for making the journey of the humanitarian mission so hard. Saying the decision was made to protect the island's "vital interests" — including economic ties with Israel.

Success three to Israel!

Organizers have since appealed to the Turkish government to get the group out via a Turkish-controlled northern Cyprus port. Turkish Cypriot officials have said they want to help the group as much as they can. The rest of the Free Gaza Movement passengers are right now being transferred from Famagusta at GMT 1700 on the 29th June.

A diplomatic tangle and mechanical problems have forced the flotilla to shrink from eight ships to five.

To add to this Ameen Abu Rashid, a member of the campaign, one of the founders of the fleet of freedom's coalition, said that the Israeli authorities, are trying to disrupt the means of wireless communication which is used between ships. Just as the ships attempt to rendezvous avoiding the pre-defined lanes of the ships.

The final tier of Israel's attempts to disrupt the fleet's mission of mercy and avoid yet another bloody PR own goal, are to use its mad right wing elements. Yes the loonies the Zionist regime tells Obama it despises, yet funds and considers its outriders for God.

Six StandWithUsInternational boats departed yesterday from the port of Ashdod on Friday, May 28 at 1pm. Each including journalists from major international outlets. The boats had a massive banner draped on the side "FREE GAZA FROM HAMAS." Those on board were wearing blood-stained t-shirts that say "FREE GAZA FROM HAMAS." SWU handed out copies of it's (version of) the Hamas charter booklet. They did on-board interviews in English, Spanish and Hebrew. They carried signs to "Release Gilad Shalit." This has become a duel at sea of facts versus propaganda," said the far right Jewish flotilla organizer Roman Baron.

Speaking from the Turkish ship Mavi Marmara, Viva Palestina's Kevin Ovenden outlined

some of the concerns and realities currently been faced by over 750 people on board the 9 ships sailing towards Gaza.

“People are very aware that the Israeli authorities and indeed others are playing all sorts of mind games, with threats alternating with so called offers, which would include surrendering the aid into Israeli hands, something which the participants of the flotilla find entirely unacceptable”

The last of the ships departed from Turkey at midnight on Thursday night, and they are all currently in International waters in the Mediterranean Sea. Their journey is faced with incredible danger, given the threats that have been issued by the Israeli Government. They have stated that they will stop this Flotilla at all costs, even by force if necessary. Their safety is in grave danger, and the time has come for the international community to stand up for their safety and well being.

The Flotilla needs our help to succeed. And it must!

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