

Greek Officials Block US Boat to Gaza from Leaving Greek Port

By [Global Research](#)

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GREEK OFFICIALS ATTEMPT TO BLOCK U.S. BOAT TO GAZA FROM LEAVING GREEK PORT

PASSENGERS SUSPECT ISRAEL/US ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON BELEAGUERED GREEK GOVERNMENT

Athens - Passengers on the [U.S. Boat to Gaza, The Audacity of Hope](#), are asking Greek government officials to clarify whether the boat they are leasing is being blocked from leaving Greece because of an anonymous request of a private citizen concerning the seaworthiness of the ship or whether a political decision has been made by the Greek government in response to U.S. and Israeli government pressure. They specifically want to know if the U.S. is using its leverage at the International Monetary Fund over the implementation of an ongoing bailout of European banks with massive Greek debts to compel the Greek government to block the U.S. Boat to Gaza from leaving Greece.

On the morning of June 23, [the American passengers](#) learned that a "private complaint" had been filed against the U.S. Boat to Gaza, which is part of an international flotilla scheduled to sail to Gaza in the next few days. This complaint, its origin still unknown to the Americans, claimed that the boat is "not seaworthy" and therefore requires a detailed inspection. On June 25 a police order declared that until the complaint is resolved the boat will not be permitted to leave.

The passengers are wondering if Israel, which has extensive economic trade and investments in Greece, is using its clout to pressure the Greek government. "Israel has said openly that it is pressuring governments to try to stop the flotilla, and clearly Greece is a key government since several of the boats plan to leave from Greece," says passenger Medea Benajmin. "It is unconscionable that Israel would take advantage of the economic hardship the Greek people are experiencing to try to stop our boat or the flotilla."

Given the very close relationship between Israel and the U.S., and the public efforts by Israel to denounce and try to stop the flotilla, the passengers on the U.S. boat want to know if the Obama Administration is using U.S. leverage at the IMF to compel the Greek authorities to stop the U.S. boat from leaving Greece. Greece's economic and political crisis is a result of extreme austerity measures imposed by the European Union and the largely U.S.-controlled

International Monetary Fund. Past U.S. governments have used their influence at the IMF to impose political conditions on indebted countries that have nothing to do with restoring economic growth.

Mark Weisbrot, Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, said: "Greece is not going to be able to meet the targets that it is pledging to the IMF and the European authorities. In this situation the IMF and therefore the U.S. government will have enormous leverage because the Fund and EU authorities will decide what will be acceptable benchmarks for Greece to receive future tranches of IMF/EU funding."

"We are guests here," said Robert Naiman, a passenger on the U.S. boat. "But we ask the Greek authorities to be honest with us. What is the origin of this complaint? Is the decision to stop our boat from leaving truly due to legitimate technical issues that can be resolved, or is it a sign that our boat will be stopped from leaving no matter what we do? What is the role of the Israeli and U.S. governments in the Greek decision to stop our boat from leaving?"

"We have a right to protest the blockade of Gaza," said Ann Wright, an organizer and passenger on the U.S. boat. "To its credit, the Greek government, like the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and Oxfam, agrees with us that the blockade on Gaza must be lifted. But for years, the only effective international action to challenge the illegal blockade has been freedom flotillas. We call upon the Greek government, which agrees that our cause is just, not to stand in the way of our peaceful protest in pursuit of our shared goal of lifting the blockade. The boat we are leasing for this journey, after its refitting for the voyage to Gaza, was surveyed by a professional surveyor and successfully completed its sea trials. There is no reason for any further delays on this matter, we are ready to sail."

For regular updates follow the US Boat to Gaza on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/usboattogaza> and visit the [US Boat to Gaza website](#).

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