

Turkish Court Indicts Senior Israeli Military Officials in Murders on Gaza Flotilla

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Global Research, June 03, 2012

warisacrime.org 3 June 2012

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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

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On the Second Anniversary of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, Turkish Court Indicts Senior Israeli Military Officials in Murders of Nine Passengers

Two years ago I was a passenger on the first Gaza Freedom Flotilla which was sailing to break the Israeli naval blockade of Gaza. I watched from a small boat called the Challenger 1, as a much larger boat, the Mavi Marmara, with almost 600 passengers, was brutally attacked by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) commandos. 30 minutes later, our boat was attacked.

Using snipers from helicopters Israeli commandos shot many of the passengers on the exposed top deck of the ship. Other commandos in boats fired live ammunition, as well as percussion grenades, into all levels of the ship. As commandos repelled down from helicopters and boarded the ship, they executed at point blank range 5 passengers, including a 19 year old American citizen Furkan Dogan, whose body had five bullets including one to the back of his head. 9 persons, 8 Turkish citizens and one American citizen, were murdered and 50 others were wounded. One severely wounded Turkish man later died after being in a coma for many months.

Each of the six ships in the flotilla was attacked by IDF commandos. Passengers on the ships were shot with tasers and beaten by commandos. Potentially lethal paintballs were shot into the faces of passengers narrowly missing eyes and soft parts of the skull.

IDF commandos took the computers, cameras, identification and credit cards and several hundred thousands of dollars in cash from the passengers. IDF commandos sold many of the stolen computers. Very few of the items taken by the IDF have been returned to passengers.

The Mavi Marmara was returned to Turkey with a new coat of paint to cover the blood stains of those wounded and killed. The other five ships are still held by the Israeli government in the port of Haifa.

Turkish Court Indictment of Senior Israeli Military Officials

On May 28, 2012, almost two years after the Israeli attack, a court in Istanbul, Turkey, voted unanimously to approve an indictment against Israel's former military chief Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, as well as for Eliezer Marom, Amos Yadlin, and Avishai Levi, the former heads of the Israeli Navy, Air Force Intelligence, and Military Intelligence. If convicted, each faces nine consecutive life terms in prison for "inciting to kill monstrously, and by torturing."

http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/turkish-court-charges-senior-idf-officials-over-gaza-flotilla-deaths-1.432983#article_comments

The indictment also charged several unidentified soldiers who shot passengers. The charges against members of the Israeli military include commandeering vehicles, voluntary manslaughter, attempted murder, persecution and causing damage to the ship.

The indictment specifies 490 victims and complainants, among them 189 who were injured during the raid. The indictment rejected Israeli claims that Israeli commandos who boarded the Mavi Marmara acted in self-defense, saying that Israeli commandos used disproportional force by firing with heavy weapons and automatic rifles on passengers who only carried “plastic flag masts, spoons, and forks.” The indictment stated that some of the victims were shot dead from close range and from the back.

2011 Gaza Flotilla and Freedom Waves

Despite the lethal Israeli attack a year earlier, in 2011, international citizen activists prepared ten ships to sail to break the Israeli naval blockade of Gaza. The Israeli and US governments pressured the Greek government to prevent the sailing of 8 of the ships that were in Greece. Three ships from the 2011 Gaza Freedom Flotilla eventually challenged the Israeli blockade. One ship that had sailed from France in July, 2011 and two others (one from the Irish campaign and one from the Canadian/Australian campaign) that sailed from Turkey in November, 2011 were intercepted by the Israeli navy, the boats confiscated and the passengers deported from Israel.

Next Challenge to the Israeli Blockade-Gaza’s Ark

Committed to continue to bring international attention to the continuing brutal Israeli naval blockade of Gaza, international activists are working with the sailing and boating community of Gaza to prepare a ship to sail FROM Gaza carrying Gazan exports goods that will have been purchased by the international community. The boat will be called “Gaza’s Ark” and will provide job skills and employment for workers on the boat as well as a market for the beautiful crafts of Gaza. <http://www.tahrir.ca/en/gazaark>

About the Author: Ann Wright spent 29 years in the US Army/Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She was a US diplomat for 16 years and resigned in 2003 in opposition to the Iraq war. She travelled to Gaza three times in 2009, helped organize the 2009 Gaza Freedom March and was a passenger on the 2010 and 2011 Gaza Freedom Flotillas. She was an organizer for the US Boat to Gaza, the Audacity of Hope and is an organizer for the US campaign for Gaza’s Ark.

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