

Violence of Israeli Attack on Freedom Flotilla's Al Awda: Hunger Strike, Swedish 'Freedom' Boat Is Coming

#DemandPressFreedom : Israel violates journalists' rights

By [Freedom Flotilla Coalition](#)

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As most of the participants and crew from Al Awda (The Return) are being deported from their unlawful detention at Givon prison in Israel, we now have a clearer picture of just how much violence was used by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) in their attack on the first Freedom Flotilla ship on Sunday. Some participants were repeatedly tasered, including in the head. Others were punched or had their head beaten against a wall by IOF soldiers. Zip-cuffs were used in a manner which cut off circulation. That any of this should happen to any civilian is an outrage. That the Israeli military would deliberately hurt a frail, 69 year old, slightly built surgeon and an Indigenous elder is even more outrageous.

The official IOF story of a 'uneventful arrival' is clearly false and masks a seriously disproportionate reaction: there was no need to deploy 12 military vessels with hundreds of armed soldiers against one unarmed former fishing boat full of peaceful participants committed to non-violence. At least two of our unlawfully detained participants began hunger strikes in prison to protest the way they were kidnapped at sea and the unhealthy conditions under which they are being held. Yes international response has been muted.

"There is a noticeable similarity with the capture of the Arctic Sunrise by Russian forces in 2013," observes Phil Ball, British activist and climber who on board the Greenpeace vessel in 2013 and subsequently imprisoned in Russia for two months. "But in our case the international outcry led to some measure of justice. Here we have another unarmed civilian vessel, this time carrying medical supplies, which was aggressively boarded in international waters, and the world community isn't upholding the same level of accountability."

Of particular concern is the fate of the two Al Jazeera journalists from Al Awda, who are among the last still held in unlawful detention at Givon prison in Israel. They have had their professional equipment, documents, personal property and money stolen while held by Israeli forces. Press freedoms are under attack by the Israel authorities and require our international support, so we must all #DemandPressFreedom

Given that our next Flotilla vessel, the Swedish-flagged sailboat *Freedom*, is due to reach Gaza soon with more boxes of much-needed medical supplies (including #Gauze4Gaza), it is even more important to affirm the internationally recognized right to innocent passage on

the high seas. We call on all national governments and international organizations to demand that Israeli forces respect the personal integrity of all on board the sailing vessel #Freedom and we #DemandPressFreedom for journalists on board, their equipment and their stories.

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