

# Israel's Illegal Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla

## Take Action to Protest Israel's Misuse of U.S. Weapons

On May 30, 2010, the Israeli navy and air force intercepted, boarded, and opened fire on humanitarian activists on a flotilla of ships attempting to deliver 10,000 tons of humanitarian supplies to the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian Gaza Strip.

According to news reports, Israeli commandos killed as many as 19 humanitarian activists on board one ship, and have abducted all 700 passengers on board the six boats composing the flotilla who are being held against their will in Israel for arrest and/or deportation.

### Illegal Act of Piracy

Israel admits that its act of aggression against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla was carried out in international waters, making it an illegal act of piracy in violation of international law.

The **UN Convention on the Laws of the Seas** provides for general freedom of navigation on the high seas (Article 87(a)). Article 88 of the convention states: "The high seas shall be reserved for peaceful purposes." Article 89 states: "No State may validly purport to subject any part of the high seas to its sovereignty."

By storming ships exercising their lawful right to navigate international waters, injuring and killing dozens of civilians on the high seas, and abducting hundreds of civilians, Israel has clearly demonstrated its disregard for international law and its engagement in piracy.

### Israel's Blockade of Gaza

For more than three years, Israel has imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on the occupied Palestinian Gaza Strip, denying its approximately 1.5 million residents adequate access to food, clean water, electricity, medical supplies and other human necessities

we take for granted.

Israel's blockade of the Palestinian Gaza Strip is an illegal act of collective punishment in violation of Article 33 of the **Fourth Geneva Convention**. As the occupying power, Israel is also legally responsible for providing the basic needs of Palestinians who are forced to live under its 43-year military occupation, according to the Geneva Conventions.



As a part of its blockade, Israel has denied Palestinians in the Gaza Strip items such as pasta, coriander, school notebooks, and cement to rebuild the more than 4,000 homes and buildings destroyed by Israel during its December 2008-January 2009 attack on the Gaza Strip, which killed approximately 1,400 Palestinians.

### United States Is Complicit

Israel's act of piracy against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and its illegal blockade of the Palestinian Gaza Strip would not be possible without the military and diplomatic support of the United States.

According to news reports, Israel attacked the flotilla with three U.S.-

made Blackhawk helicopters. Soldiers on board fired bullets and tear gas most likely of U.S. origin. Israel's navy has three corvettes built by **Northrup Grumman**, some of which may have been used in the attack. In July 2008, the United States signed a contract worth \$1.9 billion to transfer the latest-generation of naval combat vessels to Israel at U.S. taxpayer expense.

Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. military aid. In August 2007, the United States and Israel signed an agreement to increase arms transfers to Israel to **\$30 billion over the next decade**.

During the Bush Administration, Israel killed more than **3,000 innocent Palestinians**, according to the Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem. According to U.S. law, countries that commit human rights abuses with U.S. aid are to be sanctioned and aid is to be cut off.

The **Arms Export Control Act** (P.L. 80-829) stipulates that countries purchasing or receiving U.S. weapons cannot use them against civilians and must restrict their usage to "internal security" and "legitimate self-defense."

According to the **Foreign Assistance Act** of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), "No assistance may be provided under this part [of the law] to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

### TAKE ACTION

\* Tell President Obama and Congress to end aid to Israel.

\* Engage in campaigns of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel for its actions.

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