

MEMO

June 1, 2010

TIMELINE: GAZA FLOTILLA

On May 31, the Israel Defense Forces intercepted six ships, known as the “Free Gaza” flotilla. The flotilla attempted to break Israel’s blockade of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Despite claiming its primary aim was to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, in reality, its objective was to provoke Israel and incite international scrutiny on the blockade.

The flotilla was sponsored by the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation—an organization that has well documented ties to Hamas and has been linked to other Islamic terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda. Israel’s interception of the ships—and the deaths of nine individuals, including some radicals with ties to terrorist groups—have garnered tremendous media attention and international condemnation.

The following is a timeline of events surrounding Israel’s interception of the “Free Gaza” flotilla:

MAY 25, 2010:

Aware of the upcoming “Free Gaza” flotilla, Israel advises Turkey and other governments, whose nationals were planning to participate, that it will not allow the self-styled humanitarian mission to breach its defensive naval blockade of Gaza. Instead, Israel offers to offload all humanitarian goods in the port of Ashdod and have United Nations personnel deliver the items to Gaza. Turkey rejects the offer; other European governments try to dissuade their nationals from participating to no avail.

MAY 28, 2010:

600 pro-Palestinian passengers, including radicals with ties to terrorist groups and dozens of women and children—boarded the *Mavi Marmara* ship in Antalya, Turkey—the lead vessel in the “Free Gaza” flotilla. Organized by the Islamist ‘Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation’ (IHH) — which has links to terrorist groups including Hamas and al-Qaeda—the stated goal of the mission was to provide “humanitarian aid” to Palestinians in Gaza. Many though, saw the flotilla as something entirely different.

"This mission is not about delivering humanitarian supplies, it's about breaking Israel's siege on 1.5 million Palestinians," said a flotilla participant.

Violent celebratory [rallies](#), where crowds yelled chants invoking death to Jews, sent off flotilla leader and IHH President [Bulent Yildirim](#) and his supporters on their way to international waters, where they would meet up with five other ships departing from Turkey, Greece and Ireland.

En-route, Arab news-channel Al-Jazeera broadcasts [interviews](#) with passengers exalting jihadist martyrdom and singing Palestinian intifada songs.

MAY 29, 2010:

Hamas consents to broadcast on its state-controlled Al-Aqsa television in Gaza, an [interview](#) with a leading Gaza professor calling on flotilla passengers to engage in martyrdom with the people of Gaza.

MAY 30, 2010:

Despite repeated warning from the Israel Defense Forces, all six vessels making up the “Free Gaza” flotilla continue their voyage toward Israel’s maritime security zone. Aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, Yildirim tells [Turkish television](#), “We will definitely resist and we will not allow the Israelis to enter here.”

He continues, “The Israelis think that the more soldiers they send, the less casualties there will be among the activists. On this ship there are also women and children. The whole world knows this. We'll show them what it means to board the ship. If Israel wants to board this ship, it will meet strong resistance.”

MAY 31, 2010:

Israeli Navy personnel [warn](#) all six flotilla ships that they are about to enter restricted waters. Israel again offers to collect humanitarian aid and have it delivered to the Gaza Strip by the United Nations. The ships, again, refuse to comply.

The Israeli Navy begins boarding the flotilla vessels—equipped with paint-ball rifles to ensure minimum casualties. Their hand guns were to be used as a means of last resort.

Passengers aboard five of the six ships cooperate with Israeli forces—the *Mavi Marmara* does not.

Aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, Yildirim announces, “We are going to resist and resistance will win.” Militants on the ship begin yelling, “Intifada! Intifada!”

As the first Israeli soldier is lowered by helicopter onto the *Mavi Marmara*, militants onboard tried connecting the steel cables from the overhead helicopters to the boat's antenna, in order to cause the helicopters to crash. [Click here](#) to see video.

As Israeli soldiers continue boarding the ship, *Mavi Marmara* passengers begin severely beating the soldiers with iron rods, stabbing them with knives and trying to lynch them. One soldier is thrown off the deck. [Click here](#) to see video.

While Israeli soldiers tried to gain control of the situation, militant mobs continued to beat them. Two Israeli soldiers had their pistols stolen and groups of passengers started shooting live fire at the Israelis. [Click here](#) to see video.

[Video](#) was captured of a *Mavi Marmara* passenger stabbing an Israeli soldier in the back.

[Click here](#) to view video testimony from an Israeli soldier who was attacked by the militants.

After reporting back to their commanders, Israeli soldiers on board the ship were given the order to defend themselves using live ammunition. According to official reports, nine flotilla passengers, including radicals with ties to terrorist groups aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, were killed during Israel's defensive operation; seven Israeli commandoes were injured.

Eventually, all six flotilla ships were escorted to the Israeli port of Ashdod where a number of participants were detained. Those with injuries were taken by the Israel Navy to hospitals in Israel for medical treatment; several other participants were deported and sent home.

JUNE 1, 2010:

Despite the violent attack on Israeli soldiers by militant passengers aboard the *Mavi Marmara*, Israel made the decision to coordinate the transport of all humanitarian goods from each of the six ships, to the Gaza Strip. [Click here](#) to see Israel's facilitation of humanitarian aid from the flotilla to Gaza.