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[Redacted]

Behind the Headlines: Turkel Commission publishes first part of report

23 Jan 2011

This background document has been prepared before the release of the Turkel Commission's Report. It is based on information made available over the past six months.



IDF soldiers assaulted by dozens of armed activists on the Mavi Marmara

Turkel Commission (23 January 2011):

Pursuant to paragraph 10 of Government resolution no. 1796 of June 14, 2010, we respectfully submit to the Government a report on the following matters:

- a. The security circumstances in which the naval blockade on the Gaza Strip was imposed and whether the blockade complies with the rules of international law (paragraph 4a of the Government resolution).
- b. Whether the actions carried out by Israel to enforce the naval blockade on May 31, 2010, complied with the rules of international law (paragraph 4b of the Government resolution).
- c. The actions carried out by the organizers and participants of the flotilla and their identities (paragraph 4c of the Government resolution).

Concluding Remarks of Report Summary

Today, approximately five months after hearing the first testimonies, the Commission is completing this part of its work. After a journey full of obstacles and pitfalls, and after exhaustive investigations, inquiries, studies and discussions, here are our conclusions:

The naval blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip - in view of the security circumstances and Israel's efforts to comply with its humanitarian obligations - was legal pursuant to the rules of international law.

The actions carried out by Israel on May 31, 2010, to enforce the naval blockade had the regrettable consequences of the loss of human life and physical injuries. Nonetheless, and despite the limited number of uses of force for which we could not reach a conclusion, the actions taken were found to be legal pursuant to the rules of international law.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Daris, Senior Reviewer

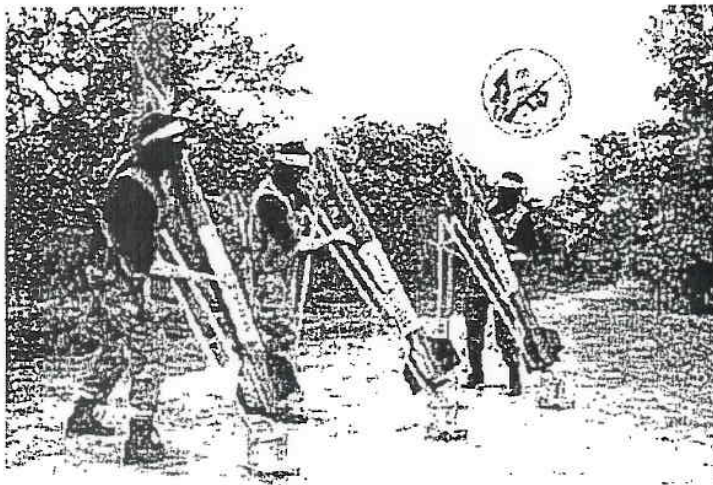
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/Behind+the+Headlines/Flotilla_operation... 1/24/2011

Behind the Headlines

Israel was entitled under international law to board the Mavi Marmara. Maritime blockades are recognized by international law as legitimate, and may be enforced in international waters.

Israel is engaged in an ongoing armed conflict with Hamas, a terrorist organization which violently seized de facto control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist groups have launched more than ten thousand rockets at Israeli cities and towns. Israel has imposed a maritime blockade on the Hamas regime in order to prevent it from building up its military capabilities, smuggling terrorists and weapons and staging attacks from the sea.

Security considerations have likewise led Israeli to impose a number of restrictions on the transfer of goods and supplies to Gaza via its land crossings. At the same time, Israel has continued to facilitate the import of hundreds of thousands of tons of food, medicine and other goods into Gaza, thereby ensuring that the humanitarian needs of the civilian population are met.



Hamas fighters prepare to launch rockets at Israel

International law recognizes maritime blockades as a legal and legitimate measure within the context of armed conflicts. A blockade may be enforced against breach. Article 98 of the San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea states "Merchant vessels believed on reasonable grounds to be breaching a blockade may be captured." Furthermore, "Merchant vessels which, after prior warning, clearly resist capture may be attacked" (see similarly art. 67a.)

The blockading party has the right under international law to stop ships which intend to evade the blockade, even if they have not yet entered the blockaded area. Ships may be stopped even if they are in international waters. The US Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations explains that an "attempted breach of blockade occurs from the time a vessel or aircraft leaves a port or airfield with the intention of evading the blockade."

International law requires that a blockade must "be applied impartially to the vessels of all States." (San Remo, art. 100). The blockading party may stop ships claiming to carry humanitarian aid. The duty to ensure that the humanitarian needs of a blockaded territory

are met, which Israel complies with, does not imply a duty to allow the passage of a particular ship.

Israel publicly declared the imposition of a maritime blockade on the Gaza Strip in full compliance with international law. It informed the flotilla ships of the blockade numerous times through diplomatic, media and maritime channels.

The flotilla's cargo was in no way essential for meeting Gaza's humanitarian needs. In any case, even if allowing a particular ship to enter the blockaded territory were essential to meeting the humanitarian needs of the civilian population, international law would still allow the blockading party to insist on inspecting the ship. It would also have the right to demand that the ship's cargo be distributed by a recognized neutral party. Such a security inspection could not be carried out at sea. Neither the Turkish IHH nor the Free Gaza Movement, the organizations which lead the flotilla, is a recognized neutral party.



Non-neutral parties- members of the Free Gaza Movement receive medals from Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh (center, first row)



IHH head Bulent Yildirim with Hamas Political Chief Khaled Mashaal

Israel took numerous steps to avoid the need to employ force while taking control of the Mavi Marmara.

Israel made numerous efforts to avoid employing force and had no desire to cause harm to civilians. It repeatedly communicated the following or similar messages to the flotilla activists both before and during their journey (video):

"Mavi Marmara, you are approaching an area of hostilities, which is under a naval blockade... The Israeli government supports delivery of humanitarian supplies to the civilian"

population in Gaza Strip and invites you to enter Ashdod port. Delivery of supplies will be in accordance with the authorities' regulations...and under your observation, after which you can return to your home ports aboard the vessels on which you arrived."

The ships were also warned that if they proceeded, Israel would be forced to take all necessary steps to enforce its blockade.

No effective method currently exists for forcing a ship the size of the Marmara to change course without taking physical control. Attempts to block the ship's passage with other vessels or to disable its systems would have endangered the flotilla participants. Israel had no choice but to board the vessel.

The naval commandos were instructed to use the minimum force necessary to take control of the vessels, and to avoid lethal force unless necessary for self-defense in the event that their lives were in immediate danger.

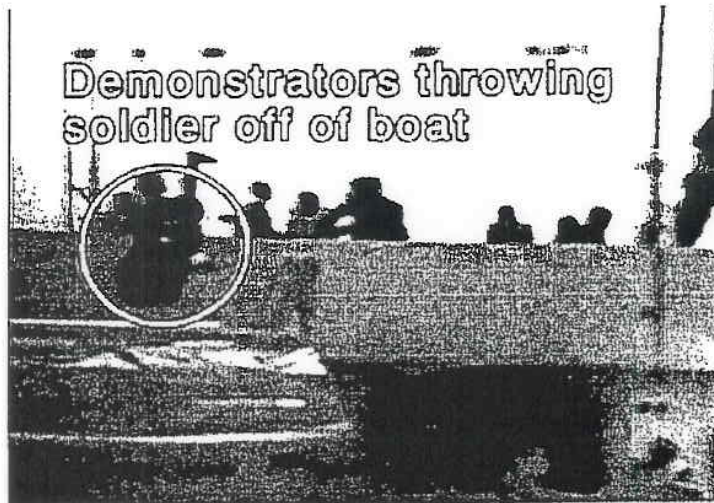
Accordingly the first teams to land on the Marmara were equipped primarily with riot-control equipment such as tear gas and paintball guns.

Using similar methods, Israel had stopped a number of previous attempts to violate its blockade without having to resort to lethal force. Five out of the six ships in the May 2010 flotilla were brought under Israeli control without serious injury to flotilla participants or soldiers. Since the Marmara, the IDF has prevented several additional attempts to violate its blockade without the need to employ a significant degree of force. This indicates that the problem stemmed not from Israeli methods, but from the violent behavior of the flotilla activists.

Soldiers abseiling onto the ship from helicopters were assaulted immediately by dozens of activists wielding knives and clubs, who also seized four of the soldiers' firearms. Facing an immediate threat to their lives, the soldiers had no choice but to use force to repel the attack.



Activists making preparations to confront Israeli soldiers



Soldiers assaulted by dozens of armed activists

A number of the Marmara's passengers were members of hardcore Islamist groups. These activists openly declared their desire for a violent confrontation and their hope to die as shahids (martyrs).

While the majority of the flotilla passengers may well have been peaceful civilians, some (approx. 40-50) were hardcore extremists determined to violently attack the Israeli boarding party.

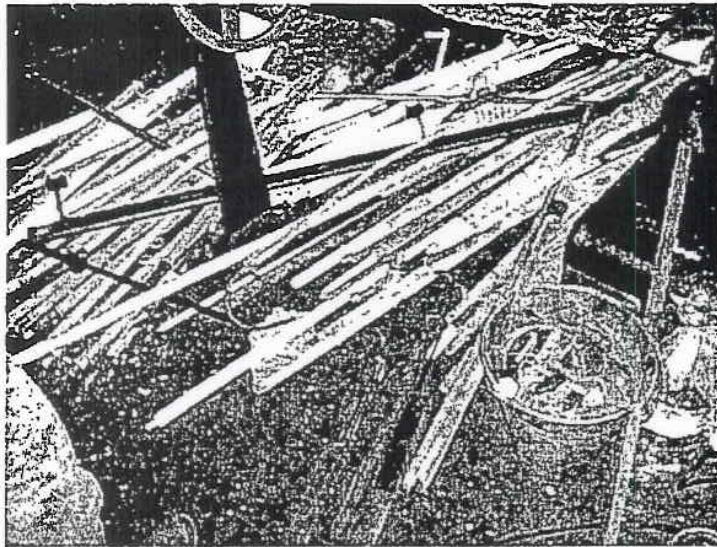
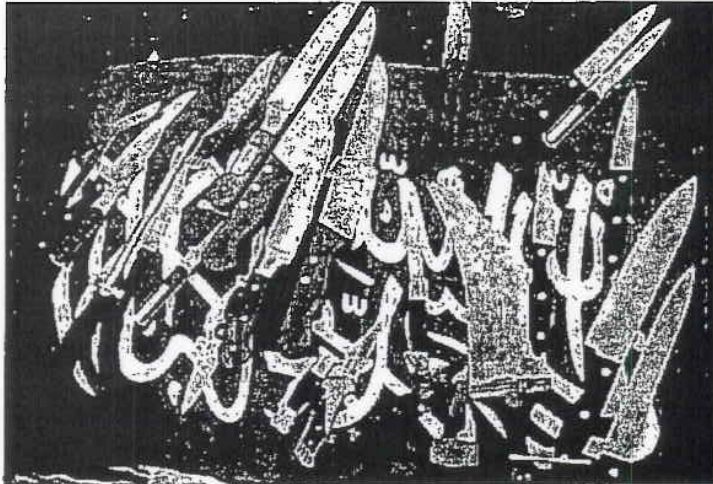
Many of the members of this group were affiliated with the Turkish Islamic organization IHH, which Western countries and terrorism experts have described as a supporter of terrorist groups including Hamas.

IHH head Bulent Yildirim declared on board the Marmara: "We're going to defeat the Israeli commandos... If you bring your soldiers here, we will throw you off the ship and you'll be humiliated in front of the whole world." During the voyage, IHH activists chanted songs celebrating the killing of Jews and openly declared their desire to die as shahids (martyrs) (view videos [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

Former U.S. Marine Kenneth O'Keefe, who took part in the assault on the soldiers, told the Haaretz newspaper ("Rough Passage", 24 Sept 2010) "I knew that if the Israelis boarded that ship, it would be a disaster... You have to be an idiot to board that ship and think it will be a ship of passive resistance."

This group of hardcore extremists took control of the ship prior to the IDF's boarding. According to the Chief Officer of the Marmara, they limited the movement of the other flotilla participants and carefully controlled entrance to certain parts of the ship.

These activists were equipped with commando knives, daggers, tear gas, gas masks, night vision goggles, and ballistic vests (view [here](#) and [here](#)) - objects not found on a humanitarian passenger ship.



Weapons used by the Marmara passengers (Photos: IDF Spokesperson)

Israeli soldiers employed a necessary and proportionate degree of force.

The first several Israeli commandos who boarded the Marmara were rushed by dozens of activists wielding knives, clubs, and chains. The first soldier to land was stabbed and thrown to the deck below. The second was shot in the stomach. Others suffered knife and gunshot wounds as well.

The attackers were able to take four of the soldiers' firearms. O'Keefe told the BBC that "myself and another brother descended on him [a wounded soldier] and the first thing I did was to go for his 9mm pistol." While O'Keefe claims that the gun was not used, two soldiers suffered gunshot wounds. Video released by the IDF records the commandos' surprise at being shot at with live fire.

Three soldiers from the first landing party were seriously wounded and taken by the activists to the ship's interior.

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Therefore the soldiers had no choice but to use limited and precise force against their attackers in self-defense.

Nearly all of those killed were IHH activists or members of affiliated Islamist groups, the very people who led the assault on the descending soldiers. About half had previously declared their hope to be martyrs.

Claims that soldiers summarily executed activists, or that they fired live ammunition indiscriminately from the air, are completely false.

Given that the soldiers were mobbed and intense hand-to-hand combat ensued, it is not surprising that a number of those shot were hit at close range. This does not in any way indicate that they were summarily executed, as the Report prepared for the UN Human Rights Council facetiously states.

The claim that activists were shot from the air is also unfounded; the commandos rappelling from helicopters required both hands to grasp the rope and could not have fired. The helicopters carrying the commandos were not equipped with firing systems, nor did they carry snipers who could have fired from the air.

Israel began its operation using stun grenades, paintball guns, and other crowd control equipment.

The timing and manner of the operation were a result of the complex situation and Israel's desire to avoid harm to civilians.

The early morning timing of Israel's boarding was the result of numerous factors. Given the expected time that it would take to board six ships carrying more than 700 flotilla participants, and the fact that the ships continued ahead at full speed, Israel decided to carry out the operation at a distance from the Israeli coast. Israel also allowed time to observe whether the ships would heed its numerous warnings to change course.

Once it became clear that boarding the ships would be necessary, Israel employed one of its most highly-trained and disciplined units, which had carried out several similar missions while avoiding the use of lethal force. The timing was likewise meant to contribute to a rapid and non-violent transfer of control.

As soon as the danger to the soldiers subsided, IDF medics attended to wounded activists. The flotilla participants were treated in a respectful manner while specially-trained units searched for additional weapons.

Immediately following the completion of the operation, IDF medics attended to the injured. Given the violent confrontation that had just taken place, the participants and ship were searched for additional weapons by soldiers specially trained in such procedures. Activists judged to constitute a potential threat were restrained, while the other flotilla passengers were not.

31 activists were airlifted from the ship directly to Israeli hospitals. Another 24 were transferred to Israeli medical facilities after docking in Ashdod. These activists were given professional medical care at six of Israel's leading hospitals.

The flotilla participants were processed in an orderly manner and offered the option of being quickly deported. Those who refused this offer were given access to medical care and diplomatic personnel while detained. Within a week, all foreign flotilla participants had departed.

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Israel prepared extensively to quickly and efficiently process the flotilla participants. Those in need of medical attention were taken to hospitals. The rest were registered in a specially erected reception center staffed by government officials and translators. In special cases, such as that of a mother with a one-year old baby, passengers were immediately sent back to their countries of origin.

The flotilla participants were then taken to the new 'Aileh' detention center in southern Israel. There they were held in open units where, other than during roll calls, they were free at all times to leave their rooms and congregate in common areas. They were provided with all their needs including medical care.

Flotilla participants willing to be deported were able to leave the country within a very short time of their arrival. The departure of those who refused was delayed by several days.

The activists were not held incommunicado. They were given access to the diplomatic officials of their home countries. Consular representatives from 26 countries, as well as 19 lawyers providing legal services, visited the flotilla participants. Participants were also provided with phone cards.

As the flotilla ships were still making their way to Ashdod, a petition was filed with Israel's Supreme Court which challenged the custody of the flotilla passengers by Israeli authorities. The Court held hearings on the matter within 48 hours and ultimately dismissed the petition.

While Israel could have begun prosecutions against those who had assaulted its soldiers, it decided to release all of the flotilla participants. Six days after the ships were brought to Ashdod, all of the foreign flotilla participants had left Israel.

The Mavi Marmara itself did not carry humanitarian aid. The limited amount of aid carried by the other ships included outdated and useless medicines.

The Mavi Marmara did not carry humanitarian aid. The humanitarian aid that was carried by three of the flotilla ships appears to have been carelessly packed, leading to some of it being damaged. The BBC's Jane Corbin found that two-thirds of the medicines aboard the flotilla "are out of date and useless."

Of the 10,000 tons of humanitarian supplies which the flotilla claimed to be carrying, approximately 8,000 tons consisted of construction materials. Hamas uses such materials for building rockets, bunkers and launching sites. Therefore, while Israel regrets the difficulties that may be caused to Gaza's civilians, it can only allow the import of such materials in coordination with recognized international bodies.

Hamas initially refused to allow aid from the flotilla into Gaza. Israel made good on its promise to quickly prepare the aid for transfer. Hamas, however, apparently felt that the need was less pressing. An unnamed Gaza official told the Guardian, "Israel brought five truckloads of wheelchairs to the crossings, but Hamas turned them back."

Israel's import restrictions and blockade are legal under international law.

International law recognizes the right of a state to impose a naval blockade within the context of hostilities.

The blockade on Gaza has been imposed strictly for security reasons and is not aimed at harming the civilian population. These security considerations include the need to prevent the smuggling of terror operatives and military-use materials into and out of Gaza, and to

prevent terrorist attacks against Israeli towns and vessels.

With regard to Israel's restrictions on the transfer of goods into Gaza- such a policy is neither illegal nor considered collective punishment. This is indicated by the numerous examples from the international community (for example, the UN's 13-year sanctions against Iraq.) Although international law requires that Israel facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid to Gaza, Israel has no obligation to engage in economic relations or maintain open borders with the territory.

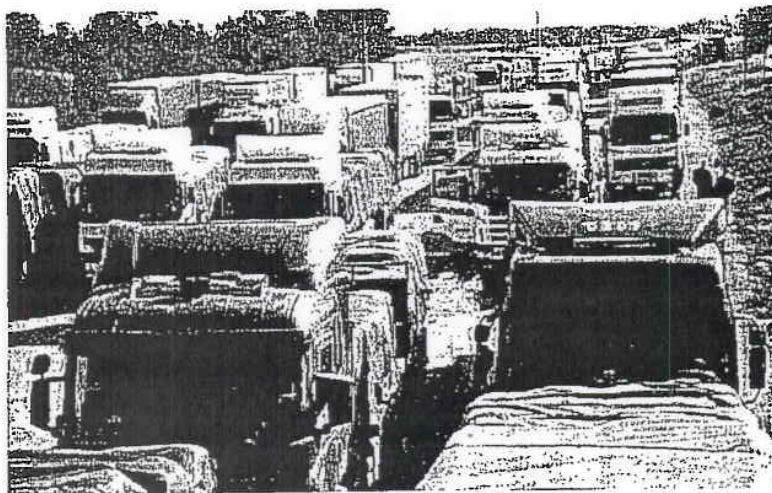
Israel has facilitated the transfer of well over a million tons of goods and supplies to Gaza, thereby more than ensuring that its humanitarian needs are met.

Despite the armed conflict with Hamas, Israel has gone far beyond the demands of international law in assisting Gaza's civilian population. Israel has provided or facilitated the transfer of over a million tons of humanitarian goods and supplies to the Gaza population. At no point has there been a humanitarian crisis in the territory.

From the end of the 2008-2009 Gaza War until approximately the time of the IHH flotilla, Israel facilitated the delivery to Gaza of 1,025,686 tons of aid, 49,610 tons of cooking gas and 136,097,330 liters of fuel. This aid includes wheat, meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, baby formula, seeds, clothes, school supplies, medical equipment, glass, wood and equipment for the flower industry.

Numerous indicators show that there is no humanitarian crisis or extreme hardship in Gaza. According to the CIA World Factbook, the projected life expectancy in Gaza is 73.68, greater than that in half of the world's countries, including many in Europe. The infant mortality rate in Gaza is 17.71 per 1000, lower than in the West Bank and in more than 50% of countries worldwide.

As explained, Israel has been forced to restrict the import of construction materials in order to prevent Hamas from using such materials for military purposes. However, Israel does facilitate the import of construction materials in coordination with recognized international agencies.



Truckloads of aid at the Gaza border crossing (Photo: IDF Spokesperson)



A Gaza market, September 2009 (Photo: Reuters)
(Video of daily life in Gaza)

Israel facilitates the transfer of medical supplies into Gaza and treats thousands of Gazans each year in Israeli hospitals.

In 2009, 4,883 tons of medical equipment and medicine were brought into the Strip. 10,544 patients and their companions left Gaza to receive treatment in Israeli hospitals (Israel also treats patients and trains doctors from the West Bank.)



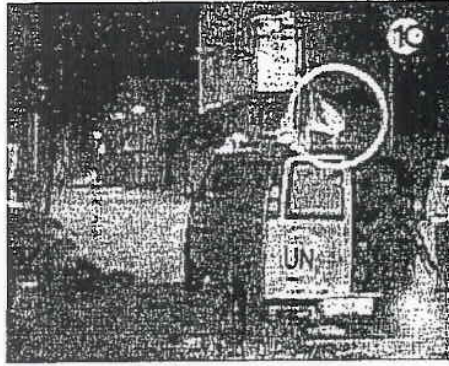
Gazan children with cancer enter Israel for treatment
(Photo: Rafael Ben-Ari/Chameleons Eye). View [video](#)
Video from Israeli hospital program for training Palestinian doctors

The medical corridor is maintained despite the fact that since 2005, Palestinians have used medical cooperation arrangements to carry out more than 20 terrorist attacks.

Hamas refuses to allow the International Red Cross or any other organization access to an Israeli soldier which it has been holding hostage since June 2006. This is a gross violation of his basic human rights.

Israel's restrictions are necessary in light of Hamas' repeated diversion of goods and supplies for its own purposes. Israel's border crossings have been attacked numerous times since Hamas' takeover of Gaza.

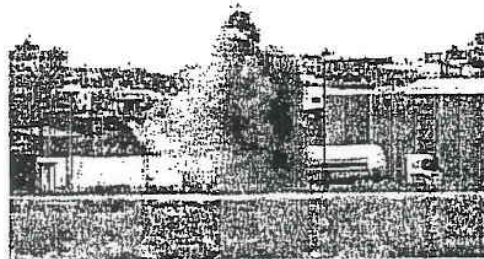
The Hamas regime's control of the Gaza Strip has enabled it to divert goods and supplies on numerous occasions in order to build its military and economic capabilities. For example in February 2009 UNRWA halted its import of goods into Gaza after Hamas repeatedly seized thousands of tons of aid from the UN agency. In August 2009 Hamas claimed to have seized three ambulances transferred from Israel to UNRWA (UNRWA officials issuing conflicting reports regarding the claim.) Palestinian officials have complained that Hamas commandeers fuel trucks coming from the Nahal Oz crossing for its own needs.



Video of Hamas using ambulances to transfer armed militants in Gaza
(Reuters, 2004)

The transfer of fuel to Gaza has been disrupted at times due to disputes between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. A UN official described this as a "Palestinian problem, made by Palestinians, and causing Palestinian suffering." Hamas has also repeatedly attacked the Nahal Oz fuel depot. Quartet envoy Tony Blair explained that "most people don't understand- that we're trying to urge Israel to get fuel into Gaza, and then the extremists come and kill the people bringing the fuel in. It's a crazy situation."

Since Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza, more than a dozen bombs and mortar attacks have been launched at the crossing points at which goods are transferred. Israeli servicemen and civilians have died in these attacks.



April 2008 mortar attack on the Nahal Oz fuel terminal at the Israeli-Gaza border, in which two Israelis were killed. (Photo: Flash90)

Nevertheless, Israel has assisted in the export of several of Gaza's main commodities, such as strawberries and flowers, in accordance with security considerations.

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Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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No: 29, 23 January 2011, Press Statement by the National Inquiry and Investigation Commission Instituted Upon Israel's Attack on the International Humanitarian Aid Convoy

On 31 May 2010, Israeli armed forces attacked, on the high seas, a convoy brought together by aid volunteers from 37 countries and different faiths to deliver humanitarian relief material to the people in the Gaza Strip. Nine persons were killed and scores were wounded during the attack.

In order to shed light upon all aspects of the attack, Turkey established a National Inquiry and Investigation Commission composed of representatives from pertinent institutions. The UN Secretary-General also set up a Panel of Inquiry in accordance with the Presidential Statement adopted by the UN Security Council which held an emergency meeting on 1 June 2010 upon Turkey's request. Israel initiated, through a commission, its own national inquiry as well. Moreover, the UN Human Rights Council has mandated an International Fact-Finding Mission to establish the violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law in connection with the attack.

Heeding the UN's call for prompt consideration of the issue, our Commission has worked intensively and submitted its Interim Report to the UN Panel on 1 September 2010. Also respecting the confidentiality of the process, our Commission has refrained from disclosing its report to the public. In contrast, the Israeli side impeded the Panel's work by constantly delaying its own report, and has chosen to share it with the public even before submitting it to the UN Panel.

Our Commission, convened on 23 January 2011 to thoroughly evaluate these developments, has decided to share, at this stage, the following with the public in view of Israel's unconstructive attitude:

- Israel's so-called "maritime blockade" against the Gaza Strip is devoid of legal basis and legitimacy. Israel's attack which is an extension of this unlawful practice is, therefore, equally illegal.

Under international law, blockades are warfare methods applicable only in armed conflicts of "international" character. Israel is seen to avoid characterizing its armed conflict with Hamas as "international", while claiming reliance on the San Remo Manual, an important compendium of international law applicable to naval war, for its so-called blockade and related practices. Yet, the San Remo Manual, including its provisions relating to the establishment of blockades and the interception of vessels on the high seas, comprise legal rules applicable only to international armed conflicts. As long as Israel does not qualify its armed conflict with Hamas as international, it is estopped from relying any of its practices within the framework of this conflict on the San Remo

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Daris, Senior Reviewer

<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/common/print.htm>

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The result is self-evident and requires no further explanation.

Basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, first and foremost the right to life, have been flagrantly violated, and these violations have continued massively up to the moment that the passengers left Israel. The report of the Fact-Finding Mission of the UN Human Rights Council vividly depicts Israel's violations and the violence it used.

Our Commission is surprised, appalled and dismayed that the national inquiry process in Israel has resulted in the exoneration of the Israeli armed forces despite all the facts that have also been confirmed by the International Fact-Finding Mission.

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Ahn, Michael

From: Guido, Deborah L
 Sent: Monday, November 01, 2010 3:13 PM
 To: Silliman, Douglas A; Ankara-PAO-IO-DL; Ankara-POL-DL; Ankara-ECON-DL
 Subject: Gaza Flotilla Guidance - as cleared

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

On Friday, the final guidance was released – FYI

EUR Draft Press Guidance
October 29, 2010

Turkey: Gaza Flotilla

Q: Did the US have advanced notice that the Free Gaza Flotilla was in fact headed to Egypt and not Gaza?

- **The flotilla organizers consistently declared in public their intention to sail directly to Gaza.**

Q: Was there an agreement between the U.S., Israel and Turkey to get the flotilla to reroute to Al-Arish (Egypt)?

- **The United States encouraged direct contacts between Israel and Turkey prior to May 31, but was not involved in any negotiations between Turkey and Israel.**

If Asked:

Q: Can you confirm assertions by Turkish officials that the U.S. was informed by Turkey that the ships were going to Al-Arish?

- **We do not comment on the contents of diplomatic exchanges.**
- **We continue to regard the UN Secretary General’s panel as the primary method for the international community to review the incident. We again express our appreciation to the Secretary General for his efforts to establish this panel, and to the governments of Turkey and Israel for their constructive participation.**

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Daris, Senior Reviewer

Drafted:
EUR/Press Valerie O’Brien 7-8602

Cleared:

UNCLASSIFIED

EUR/FO: TKaidanow ok
EUR/SE: JBaily ok
NEA/IPA:PSutphin ok
NEA/Press:EVasquez ok
P: ABaez ok
D(S): D Duty ok
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The X Meeting with Turkish X
September 20-29th 2010 (NY/GENEVA/ANKARA)

Context

We welcomed UNSYG Ban's establishment of -- and Israel and Turkey's participation in -- a panel to receive and review the Israeli and Turkish investigations of the May 31 flotilla incident. We remain opposed to the HRC flotilla fact-finding mission (FFM), which is mandated to investigate possible Israeli violations of international law related to the incident and oppose a renewal of its mandate in the September session. [redacted]

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Key Objectives

- We recognize that the Government of Turkey takes the tragic May 31st incident seriously. [redacted] the USG shares its concern. [redacted]
[redacted]

- We appreciate Turkey's constructive and cooperative spirit in participating on the Secretary General's panel regarding the incident of May 31st. The United States believes that the UNSYG panel, which includes the participation of both Israel and Turkey, offers a balanced and credible channel to address these very serious issues.



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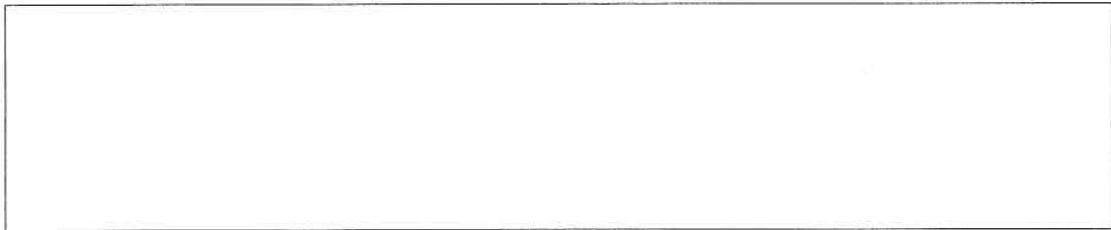
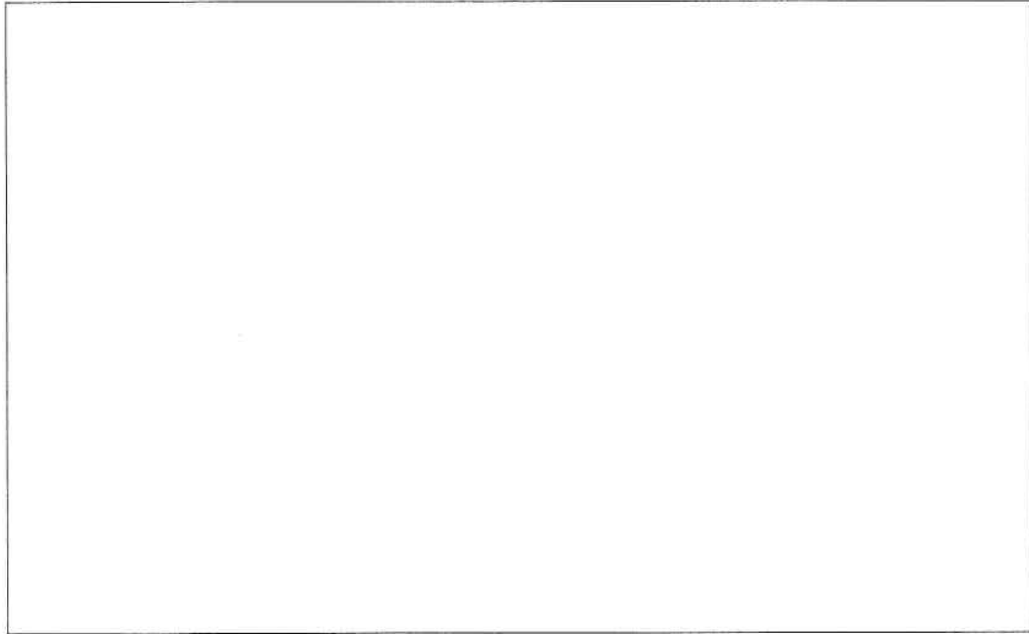
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A/HRC/RES/14/1

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Advance Edited Version

Distr.: General
23 June 2010

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Fourteenth session
Agenda item 1
Organizational and procedural matters

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council¹

14/1 The grave attacks by Israeli forces against the humanitarian boat convoy

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Taking into consideration the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, of 12 August 1949,

Emphasizing the importance of the safety and well-being of all civilians, including humanitarian personnel,

Expressing grave concern at the deepening humanitarian crisis in occupied Gaza,

Emphasizing the need to ensure the sustained and regular flow of goods and people into occupied Gaza, and welcoming the initiatives aimed at creating and opening humanitarian corridors and other mechanisms for the sustained delivery of humanitarian aid,

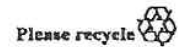
1. *Condemns in the strongest terms* the outrageous attack by the Israeli forces against the humanitarian flotilla of ships, which resulted in the killing and injuring of many innocent civilians from different countries;

2. *Deeply deplores* the loss of life of innocent civilians, and expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims and their families;

¹ The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council will be contained in the report of the Council on its fourteenth session (A/HRC/14/37), chap. I.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Daris, Senior Reviewer

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A/HRC/RES/14/1

3. *Calls upon* the occupying Power, Israel, to cooperate fully with the International Committee of the Red Cross to seek and provide information on the whereabouts status and condition of detained and injured persons;
4. *Demands* that the occupying Power, Israel, immediately release all detained men and material and facilitate their safe return to their homelands;
5. *Calls upon* the occupying Power, Israel, to immediately lift the siege on occupied Gaza and other occupied territories;
6. *Also calls upon* the occupying Power, Israel, to ensure the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment, to the occupied Gaza Strip;
7. *Welcomes* the statements made by the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights condemning the Israeli attacks and calls for full accountability and credible independent inquiries into these attacks;
8. *Decides* to dispatch an independent, international fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, resulting from the Israeli attacks on the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian assistance;
9. *Also decides* to authorize the President of the Council to appoint members to the above-mentioned fact-finding mission, who should report on their findings to the Council at its fifteenth session;
10. *Further decides* to remain seized of this matter.

10th meeting
2 June 2010

[Adopted by a recorded vote of 32 to 3, with 9 abstentions. The voting was as follows:

In favour:

Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Uruguay;

Against:

Italy, Netherlands, United States of America;

Abstaining:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, France, Hungary, Japan, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.]

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TODAY'S ZAMAN

Turkey sets up own national inquiry team for flotilla raid

Soon after a UN probe of Israel's deadly raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla began on Tuesday, Ankara announced that it has established its own national commission for investigating the May 31 raid in order to draft a report to be introduced to the UN panel of inquiry.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry, in a written statement released late on Wednesday, recalled that a committee led by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Interior Minister Beşir Atalay had already been established for investigating the May 31 attack by Israeli security forces on the Gaza humanitarian aid convoy -- which took place in international waters and ended with the killing of eight Turkish and one Turkish-American civilians.



"This time, upon the UN secretary-general's establishment of the inquiry panel, a National Investigation and Examination Commission has been established by the Prime Ministry for the purpose of investigating said attack and the treatment to which persons in the convoy had been exposed to and for preparing a report to be introduced to the UN Inquiry Panel within this framework," the ministry said.

In New York, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met on Tuesday with the four-member panel of inquiry into the May Gaza flotilla incident as they sat down to map out how they will conduct the investigation.

The panel -- comprising Chairperson Geoffrey Palmer, the former New Zealand prime minister, Vice Chair Alvaro Uribe, the former Colombian president, Israel's Joseph Ciechanover and Turkey's Özdem Sanberk -- "will spend the coming days determining how they will undertake their task," according to information released by the UN Secretary-General's office.

Ban stressed during the meeting at UN headquarters in New York that the panelists "should seek the fullest cooperation of the national authorities" as they carry out their work, and that they should perform their mandate in line with the UN Security Council presidential statement issued following the flotilla incident on May 31. The first progress report from the panel is scheduled to be delivered to the secretary-general by Sept. 15.

Turkey's national commission will work under the coordination of the prime ministry with the participation of bureaucrats from the Foreign Ministry, the Justice Ministry, the Transportation Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the Undersecretariat for Maritime Affairs. For communication with the commission of UN officials and the UN inquiry panel, Ambassador Mithat Rende has been

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Daris, Senior Reviewer

appointed as "the contact point," the ministry said.

The number of members on the commission is not definite as of yet, Today's Zaman learned from diplomatic sources.

"It is envisaged that the National Investigation and Examination Commission will prepare its report via examining the incident in coordination with all related institutions and establishments," the ministry concluded.

Amidst debates over the scope of the mandate of the UN panel, UN sources said earlier this week that the panel is not designed to determine individual criminal responsibility, but to examine and identify the facts, circumstances and the context of the incident involving the flotilla, which had departed from Turkey and was bound for the Gaza Strip.

As part of that, the panel will receive and review the reports of national investigations into the incident and request clarifications and information as it needs from national authorities, according to the same sources.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Council's independent fact-finding mission of high-level experts that is inquiring into the same incident held its first meeting on Monday in Geneva. The mission is charged with determining whether any violation of international law, international humanitarian and human rights law has taken place. Its report is expected to be presented to the council's next session, slated for September.

Rende: an expert on maritime law

Ambassador Rende, who has been chosen as the contact point for communication between the UN and Ankara concerning the inquiries on the attack, is a distinguished expert of maritime law.

Rende currently holds the position of director general for economic affairs, including energy, water and environment at the Foreign Ministry. Prior to serving in this position, he was Turkey's ambassador to Qatar. From 1996-2000 he was counselor at the Turkish Embassy in London and deputy permanent representative of Turkey to the UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO). At the IMO, Rende was responsible for negotiating issues related to maritime law. He then completed the post-graduate program at the Royal College of Defence Studies in London on security and international relations.

13.08.2010

News

TODAY'S ZAMAN

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Two-hour Israeli raid video presented in Turkey's UN report

SEVİL KÜÇÜKKOŞUM
ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News
Thursday, September 2, 2010

Turkey presented video cassettes, passenger testimonies and its legal reasoning that Israel's raid on the Mavi Marmara was an offense in its report Thursday to the United Nations about the attack on the Gaza-bound aid ship.

"We gave the Turkish Foreign Ministry a two-hour video of the Israeli raid of the ship, recorded by an American citizen. The images show how our friends were killed by Israelis," Hüseyin Oruç, a council member of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or İHH, told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review on Thursday.

Turkey included the testimonies of 55 Mavi Marmara passengers and forensic opinions on the wounded passengers in its report.

Following Turkish Ambassador Mithat Rende's presentation of Turkey's report to the U.N. investigating committee in New York, sources said Turkey's initiatives regarding the issue would continue.

Eight Turks and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent were killed when Israeli forces raided a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, which included the Mavi Marmara, May 31. Approximately 30 people were wounded in the attack; all of those killed were aboard the Mavi Marmara - a vessel owned by the İHH.

Activists claim the troops started firing as soon as they boarded the ship, while Israeli authorities say passengers attacked the commandos with steel rods and wooden staves as they were abseiling down from helicopters.

The U.N. Human Rights Council established an international fact-finding mission June 2 to investigate violations of international law, including humanitarian and human-rights law, following the attack on the flotilla.

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Turkey, on the other hand, is demanding an apology from Israel and compensation for the families of the victims.

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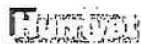
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K8



UN Gaza aid probe finds 'clear evidence' against Israel

GENEVA - Agence France-Presse
Thursday, September 23, 2010

A U.N. probe said Wednesday there was clear evidence to back prosecutions against Israel for killing and torture when its troops stormed a Gaza-bound aid flotilla in May.

In a scathing report, it also threw out Israel's argument that the aid activists were violent, thereby justifying the decision by Israeli soldiers to open fire. The incident left nine Turkish nationals dead and drew global condemnation.

Saying some were victims of actions "consistent with... summary execution," the inquiry ordered by the U.N. Human Rights Council said Israel's military used "unnecessary violence."

These "constituted grave violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law," it said, adding there was "clear evidence to support prosecutions" of crimes including "willful killing; torture or inhuman treatment; and willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health."

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu hailed the U.N. report on Thursday, Anatolia news agency reported.

The report by the U.N. Human Rights Council "is extremely unbiased and based on sound evidence. We appreciate it," Davutoğlu was quoted by Anatolia as telling reporters in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. general assembly.

"It meets our expectations. I hope the Israeli side will ... from now on act within international law," he added.

Israel rejected the report as "biased" and "one-sided." "As expected of a democratic country, Israel has been - and still is - investigating the events of the Gaza flotilla," said a statement released by the Israeli foreign ministry late Wednesday night.

It added that its own committee of inquiry, which includes two international observers, was still at work and that Israel had also agreed to take part in an inquiry set up by the UN Secretary General. "The report... is as biased and as one sided as the body that has produced it," the statement said. "Israel... is of the opinion that the flotilla incident is amply and sufficiently investigated as it is. All additional dealing with this issue is superfluous and unproductive."

Israel has insisted that it acted in line with international law, arguing that it had the right to retaliate against ships attempting to breach its blockade of the impoverished Gaza Strip. However, the probe said Israel's enforcement of a blockade was itself unlawful, since Gaza was suffering from a humanitarian crisis on the day of the deadly raid.

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"For this reason alone, the blockade is unlawful and cannot be sustained in law. This is so regardless of the grounds on which it is sought to justify the legality of the blockade," said the report, which will be presented to the rights council on Monday.

It said even those activists who did not try to stop Israeli soldiers from boarding the aid ships "received injuries, including fatal injuries." "It is apparent that no effort was made to minimize injuries at certain states of the operation and that the use of live fire was done in an extensive and arbitrary manner," said the inquiry.

"The circumstances of the killing of at least six of the passengers were in a manner consistent with an extra-legal, arbitrary and summary execution," it added. "The conduct of the Israeli military and other personnel towards the flotilla passengers was not only disproportionate to the occasion but demonstrated levels of totally unnecessary and incredible violence," said the probe.

The fact-finding mission, chaired by Karl Hudson-Phillips, former judge of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, had travelled to Turkey, Jordan and Britain to interview witnesses and officials for the probe.

Desmond de Silva, former chief prosecutor of the Sierra Leone War Crimes Tribunal, and Shanthi Dairiam, as Malaysian human rights expert, are the other members of the panel.

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Israel bracing for 'mother of all flotillas' to Gaza

TEL AVIV - From wire dispatches
Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Israel is bracing for what is being described by its military as the "mother of all flotillas," comprising up to 20 ships planning to set sail for the blockaded Gaza Strip, a report said Tuesday.

The flotilla is being organized by a coalition of nongovernmental organizations from Europe and the United States, including a group calling itself European Jews for a Just Peace, Israel's Jerusalem Post reported. The groups hope to set off within the coming months.

"We hope to have a broad coalition from European countries, and also maybe the United States," Dror Feiler, a Stockholm-based Israeli-Swedish musician and artist who is one of the organizers behind the flotilla plans, told the Post on Monday. "We would like it to be double the size of the last flotilla, with at least a dozen ships and more than a thousand people."

According to the newspaper, the Israeli military is closely tracking the planned flotilla and is preparing for a wide range of scenarios, including the possibility that due to the large number of ships, it will need to stop the vessels far from Israel's shores.

"The Israeli army can stop 12 or 50 ships if it wants," Feiler said. "[Nonetheless] there are so many ships since so many people want to get together to stop the siege, which is a collective punishment on the people of Gaza and is unacceptable."

The May 31 attack

The last flotilla aimed at breaking the Gaza blockade was stopped by Israeli commandos at the end of May. Nine activists, including eight pro-Palestinian Turks and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent, were killed during the May 31 attack, which reduced already-tense relations between Turkey and Israel to historic lows.

The coalition behind the new flotilla effort includes the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or İHH, and the Free Gaza Movement, which organized the flotilla stopped in May, the Post said.

The newspaper also reported Tuesday that the Israeli commission investigating the Gaza flotilla attack requested that the Israeli chief of staff's assistant, Col. Erez Weiner, give the court further information on the May 31 raid.

The Turkel Committee, headed by retired high court judge Yaakov Turkel, asked for electronic data and other materials that a committee headed by Maj. Gen. Giora Eiland analyzed when investigating the military aspect of the Gaza flotilla raid.

Turkel's probe also asked for explanations of the soldiers' behavior on the Mavi Marmara, the ship where

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Manual.

- Even if Israel's alleged blockade had not been lacking of legal basis to such an extent, it would still have been unlawful due to the manner in which it is enforced, since Israel has not met various requirements for a naval blockade to be accepted as lawful.

Furthermore, Israel's so-called blockade does not fulfill the requirements of "proportionality", "necessity" and "reasonableness" under international law. Having extended its restrictive policies towards the Gaza Strip far beyond what was required for its actual security needs, Israel has banned even daily consumer goods, none of which could constitute military contraband, in order to punish the civilian population. This clearly demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the so-called blockade.

International law prohibits blockades having aimed at starving the civilian population, or inflicting them with disproportionate damage. Given that numerous international organizations such as the UN Security Council, the UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Program, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Bank, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Development Program, and the UN Relief and Works Agency have all described the humanitarian situation in Gaza as "dire", "unacceptable", "unsustainable" or "illegal", Israel's so-called blockade is clearly in violation of international law in this respect as well.

All personalities, including the high level officials of the Human Rights mechanism, who examined this issue have described the so-called Israeli blockade as collective punishment of civilians. With these practices, Israel has violated humanitarian law and in particular the prohibition of collective punishment.

All these clearly illustrate that Israel's so-called blockade and all practices thereunder are devoid of legitimacy and legal basis. Indeed, the Fact-Finding Mission mandated by the Human Rights Council with respect to the attack, has determined the "blockade" to be illegal and inferred therefrom that the interception of the humanitarian aid convoy by Israel and its subsequent detention of passengers and crew were unlawful.

- All the above show that Israel has violated the "Law of War" which it relies on with respect to the attack it carried out against the international aid convoy. Israel's attack on the international aid convoy also violates international peace time law which should in fact be applicable in this case. The freedom of navigation on the high seas and the principle of the Flag State's exclusive jurisdiction are fundamental rules of the Law of the Sea. Israel has flagrantly violated these rules by carrying out an attack, without any authority and jurisdiction, on the international aid convoy while it was sailing on the high seas.

- Israel's attack against the humanitarian aid convoy, which violated both wartime and peacetime international law, has also trampled all international principles, rules and norms with the manner in which it was conducted.

While it had the possibility of intercepting the convoy carrying unarmed civilians without causing bloodshed, Israel opted for a course which made loss of life inevitable. Instead of employing numerous established means of interdiction such as firing across the bow or disabling the rudder, Israel chose to first intimidate and terrorize the passengers, and then to raid the ships in the darkness with lethal force. While so doing, Israel imposed a total electronic blackout on the vessels so that the terror it anticipated would not be transmitted to the outside world.

While Israel should have re-assessed the situation upon the passengers' exercise of self-defense, and had ample time to do so, it chose, on the contrary, to attack with increased violence.

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Turkey says ready to help UN team, hopes Israel coop

Davutoglu said he hoped that Israeli party would also have cooperation with the UN missions.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met with Sir Desmond de Silva, a member of the International Fact-Finding Mission of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council set up to examine the Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, in capital Ankara on Monday.

Officials from the Foreign Ministry said that Davutoglu and de Silva discussed the raid on Mavi Marmara ship and developments in the following period.

Officials quoted Davutoglu as saying that the stance to be assumed by international community was very important, because it would help the issue to be cleared up and also contribute to peace by showing that no country was superior to international law.

Davutoglu said that Turkey was ready to fully cooperate with UN commissions. "If you have any question, you can ask now. I am ready to share every information with you," he said in the meeting.

Davutoglu said he hoped that Israeli party would also have cooperation with the UN missions.

Members of the international mission are expected to hold a series of talks in Ankara, Istanbul and the southern town of Iskenderun till August 29.

As part of their visit, the delegation will come together with a national investigation commission, listen to those injured in the attack and the witnesses, and meet executives of Turkish ministries and institutions.

Committee members will also examine the "Mavi Marmara", "Defne Y" and "Gazze" aid ships.

Nine people, including eight Turkish and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent, were killed when Israeli forces raided a Gaza-bound aid flotilla on May 31. Around 30 people were wounded in the attack.

The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council set up the international fact-finding mission on June 2 to investigate violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, resulting from the Israeli attacks on the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian assistance.

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UN team in Turkey to probe Israel aid flotilla attack - UPDATED

Members of an international fact-finding mission will pay a visit to Turkey to examine the Israeli attack on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

World Bulletin / News Desk

Members of an international fact-finding team established by the UN Human Rights Council began meeting with Turkish officials in Ankara on Monday as part of an investigation into an Israeli attack on an aid flotilla on May 31 that left nine activists dead.

Members of the UN panel met with President Abdullah Gul and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on Monday and are due to travel to Istanbul and Iskenderun, where three Turkish ships that were part of the aid flotilla are currently docked, before completing their visit on Sunday, Aug. 29, according to a Foreign Ministry statement released late on Sunday.

The fact-finding mission is composed of British lawyer Desmond de Silva -- a former UN war crimes prosecutor -- Trinidadian judge Karl T. Hudson-Phillips and Malaysian women's rights advocate Mary Shanthi Dairiam. Its mandate is primarily to investigate whether Israel breached international humanitarian or human rights law.

The Foreign Ministry statement said the investigative team will meet with representatives from a national inquiry delegation set up by Turkey, hear witnesses of the Israeli raid, including those injured in the attack, and confer with officials from the Foreign Ministry and other relevant state institutions. The Foreign Ministry also pledged full cooperation with the UN panel, saying "all sorts of assistance and facilitation will be offered" to the team during its work.

Their final report on the May 31 raid, said the statement, "carries great importance in terms of shedding light on the facts about the incident."

The UN Human Rights Council's investigation into the Israeli raid, which took place in international waters, is separate from a higher-profile UN probe announced by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The 47-member council's probe was launched before Ban's announcement of the high-level panel earlier this month.

The president of the Geneva-based council, Sihasak Phuangketkeow, has dismissed claims that Ban's announcement made the Human Rights Council investigation superfluous, saying earlier this month that the fact-finding mission should proceed because there is a clear distinction between the missions and mandates of the two inquiries.

Israel has said it would work with Ban's panel, which is led by former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer and outgoing Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and includes members from Turkey and Israel. But the Jewish state has previously refused to take part in council investigations. Sihasak said it would be "in the interest of Israel to do so."

Both teams are expected to publish their findings in September.

Israeli commandos trying to prevent activists from breaking its blockade of Gaza killed eight Turks and one Turkish-American during the raid on one of the flotilla's six vessels.

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8/24/2010

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TODAY'S ZAMAN

UN fact-finding team in Turkey for aid flotilla probe

Members of an international fact-finding team established by the UN Human Rights Council began meeting with Turkish officials in Ankara on Monday as part of an investigation into an Israeli attack on an aid flotilla on May 31 that left nine activists dead.

Members of the UN panel met with President Abdullah Gül and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu on Monday and are due to travel to İstanbul and İskenderun, where three Turkish ships that were part of the aid flotilla are currently docked, before completing their visit on Sunday, Aug. 29, according to a Foreign Ministry statement released late on Sunday.



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8/24/2010

would be "in the interest of Israel to do so." Both teams are expected to publish their findings in September.

Israeli commandos trying to prevent activists from breaking its blockade of Gaza killed eight Turks and one Turkish-American during the raid on one of the flotilla's six vessels. Israel has said the soldiers acted in self-defense after being attacked as they boarded the Mavi Marmara, owned by a Turkish charity. Turkey, on the other hand, is demanding an apology from Israel and compensation for the families of the victims.

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Int'l Gaza flotilla committee to visit Turkey

**ANKARA – Anatolia News Agency
Monday, August 23, 2010**

Members of an international fact-finding mission are scheduled to visit Turkey to examine evidence from Israel's attack in May on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said Sunday.

The ministry's statement said members of the independent mission would hold talks in Ankara, Istanbul and the southern town of Iskenderun till Aug. 29. Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu will receive the delegation in Ankara.

The delegation is expected to confer with a domestic Turkish investigation commission, hear testimony from witnesses of the attack, including those who were injured, and meet leaders from Turkish state ministries and institutions.

Members of the international mission will also examine the Mavi Marmara, Defne Y and Gazze aid ships. In its statement, the ministry said the report the international mission would prepare was of vital importance in revealing the facts of what happened during the attack.

Around 30 people were injured when Israeli forces raided a Gaza-bound aid flotilla on May 31. Eight Turkish citizens and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent were killed.

The United Nations Human Rights Council set up the international fact-finding mission on June 2 to investigate the possibility that Israel violated international law – specifically international humanitarian and human rights law – when it attacked the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian assistance supplies.

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R14

EU-US insensitive to Israel-killed activists disappoint Turkey

UN draft resolution was adopted by 30 votes against 1 vote (that belonged to USA). EU countries abstained at the voting.

Turkish Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that the United States objected and the European Union (EU) member countries abstained against the UN Human Rights Council's draft resolution regarding Israeli attack on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla.

The ministry released a statement and said report of the fact-finding mission established by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the raid in the international waters and its consequences which resulted in death of eight Turkish citizens and a U.S. citizen, was submitted to the Council on September 22.

The draft resolution, submitted to the council by Pakistan on behalf of the 57 OIC-member states, was adopted by 30 votes against 1 vote (that belonged to USA). EU countries abstained at the voting.

The statement said the UN Human Rights Council approved the report of the international fact-finding mission which was prepared in a professional and objective stance and adopted a draft resolution on September 29 pertaining to points on following of the report.

"Despite evident EU principles on human rights, EU member countries, whose citizens were evacuated by Turkey following Israeli raid, used abstained vote and the United States, whose citizen was killed in the attack, used negative vote. Turkey was disappointed and conveyed its sensitivity on the matter to EU and the United States."

The statement said, "assessments of the report that Israel's armed attack in the international waters was evidently illegal, that Israeli troops used excessive, unnecessary and unbelievable violence and the intervention seriously violated human rights law and rules of humanitarian law were important. Turkey expects all the related parties, mainly Israel, to draw necessary lesson from the assessments in question."

Nine people, including eight Turkish citizens and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent, were killed when Israeli forces raided a Gaza-bound aid flotilla in international waters on May 31. Around 30 people were wounded in the attack.

The UN Human Rights Council set up an international fact-finding mission on June 2 to investigate violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, resulting from the Israeli attack on the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian assistance.

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Gaza flotilla: Statement by PM Netanyahu

31 May 2010

This regrettable incident was the result of an intentional provocation of forces which support Iran and its terrorist enclave, Hamas, in the Gaza Strip.



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

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[Translated from Hebrew]

Last night a regrettable incident occurred, during which people were killed and others were injured. IDF soldiers who were compelled to defend their lives were also injured. This incident was the result of an intentional provocation of forces which support Iran and its terrorist enclave, Hamas, in the Gaza Strip. This enclave, Hamas, has fired thousands of missiles at the State of Israel, and it is amassing thousands more.

This is a clear case of self-defense. Israel cannot allow the free flow of weapons, rockets and missiles to the terrorist base of Hamas in Gaza. It's a terrorist base supported by Iran; it's already fired thousands of rockets at Israeli cities; it seeks to smuggle in thousands more, and this is why Israel must inspect the goods that come into Gaza. It's also a clear case of self-defense because as our soldiers were inspecting these ships, they were attacked - they were almost lynched. They were attacked with clubs, with knives, perhaps with live gunfire, and they had to defend themselves - they were going to be killed. Israel will not allow its soldiers to be lynched and neither would any other self-respecting country.

Our policy is simple. We say: any goods, any humanitarian aid to Gaza, can enter. What we want to prevent is their ability to bring in war materiel - missiles, rockets, the means for constructing casings for missiles and rockets. This has been our policy and yesterday we told the flotilla - which was not a simple, innocent flotilla - to bring their goods into Ashdod. We told them that we would examine their cargo and allow those goods that could not be used as weapons or shielding materials for Hamas into Gaza.

Five of the six ships accepted these terms without violence. Apparently, the sixth ship, the largest, which had on board hundreds of people, had a premeditated plan to harm IDF soldiers. When the first soldiers dropped down onto the deck of the ship, they were attacked by a violent mob and were compelled to defend their lives. That is when the unfortunate events took place.

We have a simple policy, which will continue. That policy is: we have no argument or fight with the population of Gaza. We are interested in allowing them to continue their regular routines. We want to prevent any humanitarian crisis in Gaza, but we are fighting the

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http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2010/Gaza_flotill... 10/18/2010

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Hamas organization, which threatens the citizens of Israel and fires missiles at Israeli cities. It is our duty to defend the citizens of Israel, protect Israel's cities and ensure the security of the State of Israel - and we will continue to do so.

Statement following meeting with Canadian PM Stephen Harper (31 May 2010):

Gaza has become a base for Hamas terrorists backed by Iran, from which they fire thousands of rockets into Israel. They're amassing thousands more rockets to fire at our cities, at our towns, at our children. Our policy is this: we try to let in all humanitarian goods into Gaza, all peaceful commodities - food, medicine and the like. What we want to prevent coming into Gaza are rockets, missiles, explosives and war materiel that could be used to attack our civilians.

This is an ongoing policy and it was the one that guided our action yesterday. We told the flotilla of ships, we said: "You can take all your cargo. Put it in our port of Ashdod. We'll just ferret out if there are any war materials and the rest will go through." We succeeded doing this peacefully with five of the six ships. The sixth ship, the largest, which had hundreds of people on it not only did not cooperate in this effort, they deliberately attacked the first soldiers that came on the ship. They were mobbed; they were clubbed; they were beaten; they were stabbed and there was even a report of gunfire.

Our soldiers had to defend themselves, defend their lives or they would have been killed, and regrettably, in this exchange at least ten people died. We regret this loss of life. We regret any of the violence that was there. I would like to wish speedy recovery to the wounded, including four of our own soldiers.

Our policy was and will continue to be that we will let humanitarian aid, any kinds of goods that are meant for peace to the civilian population in Gaza. We have no quarrel with the people of Gaza. We do have a conflict with the terrorist regime of Hamas, supported by Iran. We want to maintain a situation where we prevent weapons and raw materials from coming into Gaza. That is our main task.