



November 3, 2011

**The Meir Amit Intelligence and  
Terrorism Information Center**

**Another flotilla to the Gaza Strip: Two ships carrying pro-Palestinian and social activists as well as media personnel set sail from Turkey on November 2 to challenge Israel's maritime closure of the Gaza Strip, despite the fact that the international community recognizes the closure as legitimate and the Palmer Report said it was a legal security measure compatible with international law.**



The flotilla emblem (ISM website, November 3, 2011)

## Overview

1. On November 2, 2011, two small vessels set sail for the Gaza Strip from the Turkish port of Fethiye. The two were supposed to participate in the aborted June 2011 flotilla, Freedom Fleet 2.<sup>1</sup> According to the organizers, the vessels should reach the Gaza Strip coast on **November 4**.

2. The ships are carrying **27 passengers** from nine countries including crew members, pro-Palestinian activists, social activists and media personnel. **Until the ships sailed the activists kept a low media profile, in our assessment in an attempt to surprise Israel** (a lesson learned from the failure of the previous flotilla). The Turkish government has made sure not to identify itself with the flotilla.

3. **The main objective of the flotilla**, according to the activists, is to break the so-called Israeli "siege" of the Gaza Strip, claiming that it is "illegal and unjustified." The **international community rejected the same claim** when it was made by the previous flotilla, while a spokeswoman for the American state department said that **Israel had the right to defend itself against weapons smuggling**. Moreover, according to the Palmer Report, **the maritime closure Israel imposed on the Gaza Strip is a "legitimate security measure" compatible with international law**.

4. The Israeli navy has **completed operational preparations to prevent the boats from reaching the Gaza coast**. Israel has stated that any country or body wishing to transfer humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip can do so through one of the overland crossings after previous coordination with the Israeli authorities (IDF Spokesman, November 2, 2011).

5. **No activists affiliated with radical Islam or terrorist operatives have so far been identified among the passengers by us** (See the Appendix for information about the passengers). The passengers also claim that they are not armed. However, past experience has shown that some of the activists aboard the ships may not obey IDF orders and may use tactics of passive resistance if IDF soldiers take control of the ships. **Such circumstances, which can be expected to be documented by the media, have the potential for becoming violent**.

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<sup>1</sup>For further information see the June 23, 2011 bulletin "The Upcoming Flotilla to the Gaza Strip – Update" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/ipc\\_e204.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e204.pdf).

## Update, November 3, 12:00 hours

6. The two boats set sail for the Gaza Strip from the Turkish port of Fethiye at noon on November 2 after a number of delays. Until they sailed, **the organizers kept a low media profile**, in our assessment lest the plan to leave for the Gaza Strip be prevented by Israel (a lesson learned from the previous flotilla, which did not set sail).

7. Two boats set sail, one from Ireland and one from Canada, **carrying about 27 passengers**. Among the passengers are crew members, media personnel and pro-Palestinian activists from Canada, Ireland, Scotland, the United States, Australia and even Israel. According to one passenger, **the Turkish authorities limited the number of passengers aboard each boat to 12**, with the result that most of the passengers who expected to participate **remained, in our assessment, in Turkey**.

8. According to the passengers, the Canadian ship is carrying **medical equipment worth \$30,000**. They claim their main objective is to challenge Israel's "illegal" maritime closure of the Gaza Strip. According to John Mallon, an activist aboard the Irish boat, both boats were accompanied out of port by the Turkish coast guard. He added that the boats were on a humanitarian mission and intended to sail directly to the Gaza Strip without entering Israel's territorial waters (Derry Friends of Palestine website, November 3, 2011).

### 9. Data concerning the boats:

1) The **Irish network's** boat (Irish Ship to Gaza): The group from Ireland sailed aboard the *Saoirse* ("liberty" in Gaelic). A technical malfunction was found aboard the boat before the previous flotilla (sabotaged by Israel, according to the organizers' claims) and it did not sail



2) The **Canadian network's** boat (Canadian Boat to Gaza): The group from Canada sailed aboard the *Tahrir*, which was also supposed to participate in the previous flotilla. It is carrying passengers from many countries. A small vessel, it is 25 meters (82 feet) long and can carry 45 passengers, although in the current voyage it is only carrying 12.



Left: The Tahrir, flying the Turkish flag (ISM website, November 3, 2011). Right: One of the activists aboard the Tahrir (Democracy Now website, November 3, 2011).

## Legitimacy of the Israeli Closure of the Gaza Strip

10. **The main objective of the current flotilla, like the previous one, is to erode the legitimacy of Israel's closure of the Gaza Strip and to hamper the IDF's freedom on action to prevent weapons and terrorist operatives from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip.** That was made clear by statements made by flotilla participants, who said that their aim was "to break the siege" of the Gaza Strip and that it was "illegal and unjustified" (The website of the Canadian network, quoting activists aboard the boat).

11. **The international community rejected the claim that Israel's closure of the Gaza Strip was illegal** and expressed the opinion that humanitarian assistance **did not have to be transferred to the Gaza Strip by means of flotillas whose purpose was to challenge Israel.** The international community expressed many reservations about the previous flotilla, which contributed to its eventually being cancelled (June 2011).

12. The United States had many reservations about the previous flotilla itself and the participation of American activists. A spokesperson for the state department told a press conference that the United States was "concerned about any of **our citizens involved in a situation that could be provocative, that could be dangerous.**"<sup>2</sup> She noted that "if people around the world want to help the people of Gaza, **we believe that the mechanisms established by both Egypt and Israel are sufficient to achieve that objective...**" (ITIC emphasis throughout). She said that Israel had the right to defend itself from weapons smuggling, adding that the United States called on all sides to show restraint (US state department website, June 27, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> She later reiterated that the flotilla was "dangerous" and "provocative."

13. The concept that Israel's maritime closure is legitimate was **reinforced by the Palmer Report** issued on September 2, 2011. At the center of the Report's findings is the statement that **Israel's maritime closure on the Gaza Strip is a "legitimate security measure" and compatible with international law**. The source of the measure, according to the Report, is the "real threat" to Israel's security from "**groups of extremists**" in the Gaza Strip [the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip undertake extensive smuggling of weapons, including long-range rockets, both overland and by sea].

## **The Turkish Aspect**

14. **As far as we know, there are no Turkish passengers aboard either boat. Huwaida Arraf**, one of the organizers of the flotilla project and a leader of the anti-Israeli **Free Gaza Movement** (FGM) network, said that the first flotilla was perceived as Turkish because most of those killed aboard the *Mavi Marmara* were Turkish. She claimed that by sending the two boats the organizers want demonstrate that the effort is international, and therefore there are no Turks on either ship (Paul Murphy website, November 2, 2011). In our assessment the real reason there are no Turks and the reason IHH is not participating is that it is currently **Turkish government policy to distance itself from the flotilla**, (Note: IHH cancelled its participation in the previous flotilla shortly before it was scheduled to set sail).

15. **The Turkish media** were late (the morning of November 3) in reporting that Israel claimed the boats had received aid from the Turkish port of Fethiye **on their way to the Gaza Strip. Selcuk Unal, spokesman for the Turkish foreign ministry, said that the boats had informed the Turkish authorities that their destination was Rhodes and that there were no Turkish citizens aboard**. He said they were **flying foreign flags** (one the United States and the other the Comoro Islands) and that **the passengers were foreign nationals** (Radio TRT, Turkish national radio, November 3, 2011).

## Appendix

### The Passengers aboard the Two Boats (Initial and Partial Report)

1. **There are 27 passengers of various nationalities aboard the boats.** For some it is **not the first trip to the Gaza Strip and some have also been to Judea and Samaria.** The 27 include **crew members, pro-Palestinian activists, social activists (mostly from the political left) and media personnel** (the organizers of the flotillas make certain that the media are well-represented).
2. The following is initial information about some of the passengers:

#### The Canadian Boat Tahrir

3. **There are 12 passengers aboard the Tahrir,** six activists, five media representatives from the Democracy Now radio station, Algeria, Iran's Press TV and the Egyptian new service.
4. The passengers are the following:
  - 1) **Michael Coleman,** from Sydney, Australia. Social activist. **Tried to sail with the previous flotilla to the Gaza Strip aboard the *Tahrir*.** Set sail in a kayak and was detained by the Greek coast guard.



Michael Coleman (Canadian Boat to Gaza website, November 3, 2011)

2) **Lutayif Ihab**, Canadian of Egyptian extraction. Electronics engineer, poet and photographer. Veteran social activist in Canada and around the world. **Went to Iraq and "Palestine" several times on various missions.**



**Lutayif Ihab (Canadian Boat to Gaza website, November 3, 2011)**

3) **Majid Kael**, resident of Haifa, in his 20s. **Studies philosophy and political science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.** Political activist, journalist, author. Editor of the Kaditanet website.

4) **David Heap**, Canadian. Studied French and linguistics at the University of Western Ontario. Social activist in the fields of Latin America and workers' movements. **Participated in a convoy to the Gaza Strip in December 2009.**



**David Heap (Canadian Boat to Gaza website, November 3, 2011)**

5) **Kit Kittredge**, from Quilcene, Washington, 53. Member of Codepink 3,<sup>3</sup> **was supposed to sail with the previous flotilla aboard the American boat.**

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<sup>3</sup>Women for Peace (Codepink) is an anti-war network based in the United States. It left a support team for the flotilla in Turkey, headed by Medea Benjamin, one of the network's cofounders.



**Kit Kittredge (Canadian Boat to Gaza website, November 3, 2011)**

6) **Karen De Vito**, from Vancouver. Veteran social activist.



**Karen De Vito (Canadian Boat to Gaza website, November 3, 2011)**

7) **Adrian Vostenwal**. No details available.

8) **Hassan Ghani**, an Iranian Press TV correspondent.



## The Irish Boat Saoirse



Activists aboard the Irish boat (Derry Friends of Palestine website, November 3, 2011).

#### 4. There are 15 passengers aboard the Saoirse:

1) **Pat Fitzgerald**, member of the Waterford City Council representing the Sinn Fein. Owns an engineering firm. Was a fisherman and sailor. Authorized fireman and first aid provider. Serves as ship's engineer.



**Pat Fitzgerald**  
([http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494))

2) **John Mallon**, from Belfast. Leading member of Palestinian Friendship League and Belfast chapter of the Irish Ship to Gaza. Active in Irish prisoners' affairs.



**John Mallon**  
([http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494))

3) **Zoe Lawlor**, teaches at Limerick University. Has previously been to **Judea and Samaria**, first in 2005 as a member of the national committee of the Irish-Palestinian Solidarity Campaign.



**Zoe Lawlor**  
([http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494))

4) **Feilim Egan**, from Dublin. Internationally-known artist with more than 50 solo exhibitions to his credit. Won a UNESCO prize in 1993. Supposed to be a crew member.



[http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494)

5) **Paul Murphy**, from Dublin. Member of the Irish Parliament. Leftist social activist for workers and the unemployed.



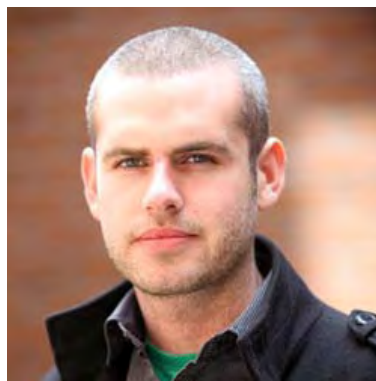
**Paul Murphy**  
([http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494))

6) **Mags O'Brian**, from Dublin. Trade union activist, active member of the Labour Party. Member of an organization called the Trade Union Friends of Palestine.



**Mags O'Brian** ([http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494))

7) **Hugh Lewis**, from Dublin. Degree in documentary photography, member of the People Before Profit council and the Irish Anti-War Movement.



**Hugh Lewis** ([http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page\\_id=494](http://irishshiptogaza.org/?page_id=494))