

# **From South Africa: The Israeli raid on the Gaza Flotilla is an attack on us all**

Tuesday 8 June 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 3 June 2010).

Amandla! strongly condemns Zionist Israel's brutal attack on the humanitarian aid activists known as the Freedom Flotilla who in solidarity with the Palestinian people and against the blockade of Gaza were transporting 10,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid to the people in the Gaza Strip. Approximately 700 activists, volunteers from various countries were carrying supplies for a besieged civilian population because this area has been blockaded by Zionist Israel since 2007 causing misery to the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza. The Freedom Fleet was more than 64 km from the coast of Gaza, well in international waters, when it was raided by Israeli commandos causing the death of at least nine people and injuries to tens of others.

Amandla!

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## **Civil Society Statement on Israeli attacks on aid ships to Gaza**

Representatives from unemployed people's movements and organisations, trade unions and other civil society organisations meeting to discuss the economic crisis, unemployment and strategies for decent work in a national seminar hosted by the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) on Monday 31 suspended their discussions to condemn Israel's attack on a flotilla of aid boats heading for besieged GAZA in occupied Palestine.

While we anxiously await on more details, especially the situation of our comrade Gadijah Davids, a journalist with community radio station Radio 786, we condemn this attack as a form of state terrorism. This barbaric act reminds us of the atrocities carried out by the apartheid government in Southern Africa. We call on our government to immediately to expel the Israeli ambassador from SA as a first step towards isolating Israel's apartheid state.

Adopted unanimously, River Club 31 May 2010

**Issued by the AIDC** on behalf of seminar participants

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## **South African Civil Society outraged at Israeli Massacre**

**Issued by the Coalition for a Free Palestine, 31 May 2010**

The undermentioned civil society organisations, including the Palestine solidarity movement in South Africa and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, are outraged by the massacre

committed by Israeli forces this morning, in flagrant violation of international maritime law.

At 04:30 this morning, in international waters, Israeli navy commandos invaded an international humanitarian aid boat, Mavi Marmara, which was part of an aid flotilla travelling to the Gaza Strip. The troops killed at least 19 civilians of the aid convoy and injured dozens more. The attack was a direct violation of international law and reflects the Israelis' arrogant and flagrant disregard for law and human rights.

The convoy of ships was carrying 750 people from 40 different countries including 35 international politicians, members of parliament, former diplomats, human rights activists, aid workers and journalists and was destined for the Gaza port of Rafah later this afternoon. The flotilla carried essential aid material, such as medication, construction material, toys, workbooks, chocolate and pasta to Gaza. The entry of all these materials into Gaza has been banned by Israel. It is widely accepted that Israel's imposition of the now four year long siege on the Gaza strip is a crime against humanity. This view is supported by the recent UN Report by South African Judge, Richard Goldstone. According to the UN, Israel's Operation Cast Lead in January 2009 damaged or destroyed at least 11,000 houses, 105 factories, 20 hospitals and clinics, and 159 schools, universities, play schools and technical institutions. Further, 1,400 people were killed, some 51,800 were displaced, and 20,000 remain homeless to this day because Israel will not allow construction material into the besieged territory. By sailing directly to Gaza, outside of Israeli waters, the flotilla was attempting to break the siege which is in violation of Article 33 of the Geneva Convention which clearly states that collective punishment is a crime against humanity. South Africans will from today be joining the call to demonstrate support for the courageous women and men on the flotilla and to mourn the loss of those murdered on their humanitarian aid mission. We demand that, until Israel acts in accordance with international law, releases all political prisoners, and lifts the siege on Gaza, the South African government:

- \* immediately recalls the South African ambassador to Tel Aviv;
- \* expel the Israeli ambassador back to Israel;
- \* sever all diplomatic relations with Israel; and
- \* support the international campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against the Apartheid Israeli state.

*For more information, please call:*

Crystal Dicks (COSATU):

Salim Vally (Palestine Solidarity Committee):

Igsaan Hendricks (Muslim Judicial Council):

(PSA):

(PSG):

*This statement is supported by:*

COSATU

Palestine Solidarity Committee

Palestine Solidarity Group

Palestine Solidarity Alliance

Muslim Judicial Council

Muslim Youth Movement

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## **Tutu condemns Israel aid-boat attack**

May 31, 2010 3:25 PM

Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and a group of retired global leaders have joined international leaders in condemning the Israeli forces' raid on a ship delivering relief supplies to Gaza.

"We as elders condemn Israel utterly for this attack. The actions of the Israelis is inexcusable," said Tutu.

He was speaking at the conclusion of a meeting of the group formed in 2008 to highlight humanitarian issues. Members include former UN secretary general Kofi Annan and former US president Jimmy Carter.

Reading a statement, Tutu said the Elders wanted an urgent investigation into the "tragic incident" after Israeli forces boarded the Mavi Marmara as it sailed with a flotilla to Gaza.

He said it should draw the world's attention to the "terrible suffering of Gaza's 1.5 million people, half of whom are children under the age of 18".

The Elders considered Israel's blockage of Gaza illegal collective punishment of its inhabitants and said it was also counterproductive.

"This is because it creates unacceptable suffering, in the process empowering extremists and undermining moderate forces in Gaza", they said.

On Monday morning Israeli forces boarded one of the ships which was violating Israel's blockade on certain goods entering the contested area. Israel warned last week that it would arrest those on board.

News reports said that at least 10 people were killed.

The Israeli Defence Force has said that they had tried to intercept the ships to search them, but were then fired on and attacked with knives and clubs.

Ten civilians were killed and four navy staff were among those injured.

The soldiers had been given full backing by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to Associated Press.

South Africa's foreign office said it was trying to establish whether there was a South African on board the ship during the attack, which it said should get the "highest level of international condemnation".

The Congress of SA Trade Unions called the incident "state sponsored piracy" and urged a boycott of Israeli products, while the SA Municipal Workers' Union issued a statement on behalf of a large group of civil society organisations calling it a "massacre".

"The convoy of ships was carrying 750 people from 40 different countries including 35 international

politicians, members of parliament, former diplomats, human rights activists, aid workers and journalists and was destined for the Gaza port of Rafah later this afternoon."The flotilla carried essential aid material, such as medication, construction material, toys, workbooks, chocolate and pasta to Gaza," which the organisations said were banned by Israel.

They said South Africa should immediately recall its ambassador to the capital Tel Aviv, expel the Israeli ambassador in South Africa, and sever diplomatic ties with Israel.

The organisations represented in the statement included the Palestine Solidarity Committee and the Muslim Judicial Council.

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### **COSATU condemns Israeli state piracy**

May 31, 2010 — The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is outraged at the murder by Israeli commandos' of at least 20 people — and injuries to a further 60 — as a result of their armed attack on a convoy of ships carrying aid to the people of Gaza last night.

COSATU sends its condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives and calls upon the people of the world to condemn this act of Israeli state-sponsored piracy.

The six-ship flotilla, with 750 Palestine solidarity activists from around the world on board and carrying 10,000 tonnes of aid for the people of Gaza, left Cyprus on Sunday and had been due to arrive in Gaza today.

Then, when it was about 64 km out to sea, in international waters, Israeli armed forces boarded the largest vessel and fought with those on board. The activists say Israeli troops came on board shooting. Israel is now reported to be towing the boats to the port of Ashdod and says it will deport the passengers from there.

The ships were bringing the people of Gaza 10,000 tonnes of badly needed concrete, toys, workbooks, chocolate, pasta and substantial medical supplies. It was acting in accordance with international law.

COSATU fully supports the call on the international community to pressure their governments to condemn this brutal deed and hold Israel accountable for the murder of foreign civilians at sea and illegal piracy of civilian vessels carrying humanitarian aid.

The federation welcomes the decision by the government of Spain and Sweden to withdraw their ambassadors from Israel and calls upon the South African government to follow their lead.

The flotilla was an international response to the plight of the people of Gaza, following Israel's closure of the border. Amnesty International in their Annual Human Rights Report concluded that the siege has "deepened the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Mass unemployment, extreme poverty, food insecurity and food price rises caused by shortages left four out of five Gazans dependent on humanitarian aid. The scope of the blockade and statements made by Israeli officials about its purpose showed that it was being imposed as a form of collective punishment of Gazans, a flagrant violation of international law."

The United Nations has continuously stated that only a fraction of the required aid is entering Gaza due to what it calls "the medieval siege". John Ging, the director of UNRWA in Gaza, has specifically

expressed the need for the flotilla to enter Gaza.

The European Union's new foreign affairs minister, Catherine Ashton, has just reiterated its call for, "an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza".

COSATU also calls for greater support for the international boycott, divestment and sanction campaign against Israel, which is proving again to be violent and ruthless in attacking and murdering those who stand in its way. We urge all South Africans to refuse to buy or handle any goods from Israel or have any dealings with Israeli businesses.

COSATU reaffirms its support of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to national sovereignty and the same human rights as any other people. We demand the immediate end to the Israeli siege and the illegal occupation of the sovereign territory which has been violently seized from the Palestinian nation.

Issued by Patrick Craven (national spokesperson), Congress of South African Trade Unions.

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## **NUM condemns Israel, calls for independent inquiry**

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is enraged by the callous and murderous actions of the Israeli naval commandos when they raided a Turkish led international humanitarian envoy to the Israeli blockaded Hamas ruled Gaza Palestinian territory. The pro-Palestinian flotilla led boat, the Turkish Marmora, with 600 mixed nationals activists aboard, was violently intercepted by the Israeli commandos resulting in the death of 19 reported deaths.

The NUM is concerned that the latest action of the state of Israel threatens the peace process and the realization of a two state solution to the Israeli - Palestine conflict. These callous and barbaric actions amount to a violation of international law because the incident took place 80 miles out to sea in international waters and has increased tensions and threats of armed retaliatory conflict along the Mediterranean peninsula.

While the NUM supports the UN Security Council's call for Israel to conduct a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation of the flotilla incident and condemning of the Israeli acts of violence and the immediate release of ships and civilians held by Israel , we do not believe that Israel is capable to conduct such an investigation. We instead call for an international, independent inquiry under the auspices of a United Nations agency and a consideration for sanctions to be imposed against Israel upon an adverse finding of the investigation against Israel .

"We applaud the bold diplomatic action by Spain to recall its ambassador and call upon nation states to do the same as a sign of protest against the action of the Israeli State . We also call upon the international community to demand the lifting of the blockade" says Senzeni Zokwana , the NUM President and President of the 20 million member International Chemical, Energy, Mining and General Workers Union (ICEM).

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## **People's Health Movement statement on Israel's attack on the civilian ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza**

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010

The People's Health Movement (PHM)<sup>1</sup>, strongly condemns the Israeli government's violent and premeditated attack on the civilian flotilla's carrying peaceful activists and humanitarian aid to Gaza on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

The Israeli army's attack using live ammunition, which resulted in death of civilians and took place in international waters, was a direct violation of international maritime law. The activists were protesting the Israeli blockade on Gaza. It appears that at least 9 civilians were killed (according to the Israeli sources), with dozens of others injured.

We note that the flotilla, among other forms of humanitarian aid, was carrying vital supplies required to address the rapidly deteriorating situation in Gaza as regards health and health care. It included essential medicines, wheelchairs and building materials - vital supplies needed to rebuild health facilities, address the acute shortage of medicines and help in the rehabilitation of people maimed as a result of military action by Israel.

The United States backed Israeli government has for many years violated the human rights of Palestinian people, through the occupation of Palestinian territories; the economic blockade against Gaza; and ongoing military action against civilian population under occupation. The impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of people, especially women and children is severe (please see People's Charter for Health).

In their recent Human Rights Report, Amnesty International highlights the impact of the collective punishment of people living in Gaza as having "deepened the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Mass unemployment, extreme poverty, food insecurity and food price rises caused by shortages". Clearly, the people in Gaza face a health emergency, contributed to by the decimation of health care facilities, as well as by the impact of the blockade and military actions on social determinants of health.

PHM is a global network bringing together grassroots activists, civil society organizations and academics from around the world, particularly from low income countries. PHM works towards the revitalisation of primary health care and works to address the social determinants of health, including in particular, the growing inequity within and between nations, mostly due to unfair economic structures which lock so many people into poverty and poor health. We have a presence in more than 70 countries around the globe.

The People's Health Movement demands:

- \* A credible and independent investigation into this barbaric attack on peaceful civilians;
- \* Israel to allow for the free flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza. According to the UN, only a fraction of aid required is entering Gaza.
- \* That Israel immediately suspends the economic blockade on Gaza and ends the occupation of Palestinian territories;

\* That governments around the world sever diplomatic, trade and military ties with Israel and support the international campaign of Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against the Apartheid Israeli state.

We call on civil organizations and citizens around the world to pressurize their governments to take action against Israel, to put pressure on Israel to allow humanitarian aid and food into Gaza; and to end the blockade on Gaza which is negatively impacting on large numbers of innocent women and children, elderly and the sick. We appeal to ordinary citizens in Israel to condemn this dastardly act of their Government and to articulate a reversal of the Israeli Government's policy towards Palestine.

Bridget Lloyd (Global Co-ordinator on behalf of the secretariat), Prem John (Co-chairperson, India), Fran Baum (Co-Chairperson, Australia) Hani Serag (Associate coordinator, Egypt), Amit Sengupta (Associate Coordinator, India), Alexis Benos (Greece), Arturo Quizhpe (Ecuador), Bala (Sri Lanka), Claudio Schuftan (Vietnam), David Legge (Australia), David McCoy (United Kingdom), David Sanders (South Africa), Delen de la Paz (Philippines), Ekbal (India), Jihad Mashal (Palestine), Lanny Smith (USA), Maija Kagis (Canada), Margarita Posada (El Salvador), Maria Hamlin Zuniga (Nicaragua), Martin Khor, (Malaysia), Mira Shiva (India), Qasem Chowdury (Bangladesh), Ravi Narayan (India), Sarah Shannon (USA), Zafrullah Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

***On behalf of the People's Health Movement***

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**P.S.**

\* From Amandla! website:

<http://www.amandlapublishers.co.za/home-menu-item/301-the-israeli-raid-on-the-gaza-flotilla-is-an-at-tack-on-us-all>