

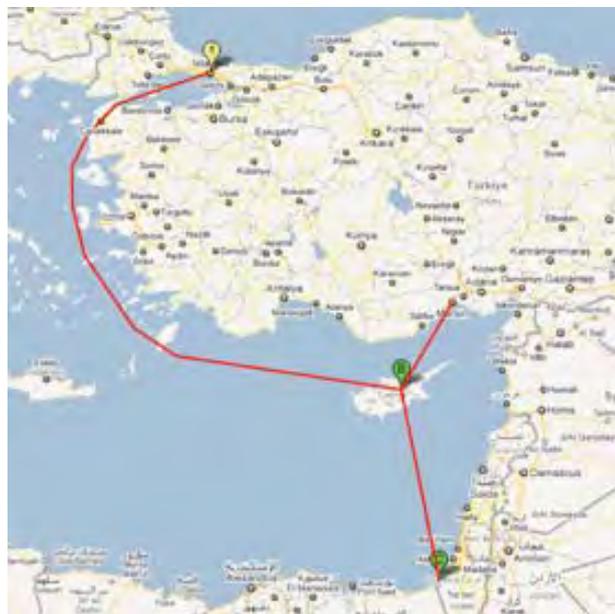


**Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center**

April 7, 2010

**The Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip and pro-Palestinian organizations in Europe are planning a flotilla of aid to the Gaza Strip. The coordinators of the “ship intifada” want to avoid confrontation with the Egyptians but are taking into account confrontation with the Israeli navy backed by media and diplomatic campaigns.**

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The scheduled route of the Turkish ships that are going to take part in the flotilla (from the website of IHH, an organization playing a major role in the flotilla, April 7, 2010)

## Overview

**1. In the past several months, preparations are being made for a large-scale naval shipment of aid to be transferred to the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip.**

The flotilla **is scheduled to arrive in the Gaza Strip in several weeks.** Two other flotillas to the Gaza Strip are scheduled to take place in the month of June. The flotilla has been organized by a **coalition of European pro-Palestinian organizations that have associated themselves with the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip.**

2. The major organizations and personalities involved in organizing the flotilla are:

a. **A pro-Palestinian Islamic-oriented human rights organization in Turkey called Insani Yardim Vakfi (IHH).** That organization **plays a key role** in organizing the flotilla, **having even acquired a passenger ship and a cargo ship designated specifically for those flotillas** (see Appendix C for details on the organization). The organization is banned in Israel.

b. **A European organization called “The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza”.**

c. **An international organization called “Free Gaza”** which seeks to lift the Israeli “blockade”. According to the organization’s website, it has members from Australia, Britain, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Lebanon, Palestine, and the US.

d. Pro-Palestinian organizations and activists from **Sweden and Greece** which purchased two ships for the flotilla.

e. **Hamas supporters in Britain** are also involved in organizing the flotillas (the most prominent are senior Hamas operative Muhammad Sawalha and Parliament member George Galloway). It has been reported that a flotilla of the British **Viva Palestine** organization is scheduled to depart in June.

3. **The Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip,** which is involved in organizing the flotilla, is preparing to make the most out of it in terms of propaganda and political profits. According to announcements made by **Jamal al-Khudari,** a Hamas operative who heads the “Popular Committee Against the Siege”, **the possibility that Israel will try to prevent the arrival of the flotilla has been taken into account. In response, numerous actions have been planned in order to make it difficult for Israel:** the ships will depart on different dates and from different destinations. On board the ships will be politicians from Western, Arab, and Muslim countries, including parliament members, whose

presence will be a deterring factor for Israel, as far as the organizers of the flotilla are concerned. The ships will rendezvous at a single location and **enter the Gaza Strip together, making it difficult for the Israeli navy**; the ships will be met by **100 Palestinian boats** with representatives from various sectors of Palestinian society (including children). The flotilla's arrival will be accompanied by a **media campaign with the assistance of journalists on board the ships** (interview with Al-Khudari, Al-Aqsa TV, April 5, 2010).

4. According to a press release issued after a press conference held on April 2 in Istanbul, the flotilla will consist of **at least 8 ships**, including three passenger ships, with **over 500 passengers of various nationalities** (from over 20 countries). The ships will carry **over 5,000 tons of equipment**, including cement and iron (Israel has imposed restrictions on the import of those materials into the Gaza Strip) (the website of Free Gaza, one of the organizations behind the flotilla, April 2). We believe it must be taken into consideration, as in the past, that the organizers of the flotilla, in addition to transporting equipment, will also attempt to transport financial assistance for the Hamas administration. According to a Hamas report, the ships will arrive from **Turkey, Britain, Greece, and Ireland** (Palestine-info from Istanbul, April 2, 2010).

5. It appears that the parties involved in the flotilla (**"the ship intifada"**, as Jamal al-Khudari said) **are taking into consideration the possibility of confrontations with the Israeli navy**, creating a provocation that will be used by Hamas and its partners for propaganda and political gains. It is worth to mention a statement made by Muhammad Sawalha, the senior Hamas operative in Britain who was involved in launching the previous aid flotilla ("Lifeline 3"). According to Sawalha, the next aid convoy will avoid an "unwanted confrontation" with the Egyptian authorities, which happened last time. Next time, said Sawalha, **"the confrontation will be directly with the Zionist enemy itself on the high seas"** (Al-Intiqad, Hezbollah's website, January 17, 2010).<sup>1</sup>

6. See Appendices for a summary of the statements made about the flotilla by Jamal al-Khudari and the European organizations taking part in it.

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<sup>1</sup> See our January 29, 2010 Information Bulletin: ["Hamas continues initiating anti-Israeli activities in Europe: Muhammad Kazem Sawalha is a Hamas activist living in Britain who in the past was involved in operational activities in Judea and Samaria. He is personally involved in preparations to dispatch another aid convoy to the Gaza Strip by sea to confront Israel"](#).

## Appendix A

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### **Press release issued after a press conference held in Istanbul on April 2 by the organizers of the flotilla (according to the Free Gaza website, April 3)**

#### **“Coalition to Break the Blockade on Gaza Announced”**

WRITTEN BY FREE GAZA TEAM | 03 APRIL 2010

POSTED IN [NEWS](#)

April 3, 2010

Istanbul, Turkey – Following months of preparation, a coalition bringing together a number of organizations and movements working to break Israel's illegal blockade on Gaza was announced yesterday in Istanbul. **The coalition, comprised of the Turkey-based IHH (Insani Yardim Vakfi) organization, the European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG), the Greek Ship to Gaza campaign, the Swedish Ship to Gaza campaign and the Free Gaza Movement**, will launch a flotilla of ships laden with cargo, media, parliamentarians, celebrities and activists to Gaza next month.

The flotilla includes at least eight vessels, including three cargo ships, and will set sail from European ports beginning May 3, reaching the port of Gaza later in the month. Over 500 passengers from more than 20 countries will take part, and 5,000 tons of cargo, including cement, prefabricated housing, other building materials, medical equipment, and educational supplies will be delivered to Palestinians in Gaza.

The Free Gaza Movement has been launching ships to Gaza since August 2008, partnering with organizations and activists around the world on these missions. In December 2009, IHH led a land convoy to Gaza that brought tons of humanitarian aid and other supplies. In January 2010 the European Campaign brought 50 parliamentarians to Gaza in solidarity with the Palestinian people and to witness the devastation wrought by Israel's illegal policies. Ship to Gaza/Greece and Ship to Gaza/Sweden meanwhile have had ongoing campaigns in their countries to raise awareness and funds for this effort and for materials to be brought to Gaza. “Through this coalition, these organizations will be able to maximize resources, experience and commitment to ending the illegal siege on Gaza. Even as Israel continues its daily

persecution of Palestinians, we will use this action to wake the world's consciousness about the crimes committed against Palestinians," said IHH President Bulent Yildirim.

The coalition invites organizations and individuals from around the world to join the effort by providing supplies for Gaza and contributing financial support for the mission.

## Appendix B

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### Details on the flotilla as related by Jamal al-Khudari, a Hamas activist and chairman of the Popular Committee Against the Siege on Gaza



Dr. Jamal al-Khudari, chairman of the Popular Committee Against the Siege on Gaza and member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Ikhwan Online, the Muslim Brotherhood's website, April 5, 2010)

1. In early April, Jamal al-Khudari made several statements on the media on the flotilla expected to arrive in the Gaza Strip (**"the intifada of ships"**). Following are details on the flotilla as they appeared in his statements (Al-Aqsa TV, April 5; Safa News Agency, April 4; Al-Quds TV, April 2).

a. The first flotilla will include **at least ten ships; however, their number may reach twenty.**

b. **The first flotilla will depart in late April/early May 2010.** Two more flotillas are scheduled to depart in June 2010.

c. The flotillas will depart on various dates in April from **Turkey, Greece, and Ireland** (and from **Britain** as well, according to another version posted on Palestine-info).

d. Most of the participants in the flotilla will be **European and Turkish**, with only a few from Arab countries. According to Al-Khudari, the **Turkish participation** in the flotilla is particularly important.

e. Many participants will be **parliament members from various countries** (over 50, according to Al-Khudari), activists from humanitarian organizations, journalists, engineers, and doctors. Some participants are former officials from various countries, and some are currently decision-makers. He said that their presence on the ships will make it difficult for Israel to prevent their arrival.

f. The ships will be met by **100 boats and a media campaign**. On board the boats will be journalists, photographers, activists from foreign aid organizations, observer groups, civilians who suffered from Israel's attacks, and representatives of other sectors of Palestinian society.

g. The activists arriving in the Gaza Strip will visit the sites damaged during Operation Cast Lead and hospitals, where they will meet with families of prisoners and victims.

## Appendix C

### The Turkish involvement in the flotilla

#### Overview

1. **The Turkish involvement in the current flotilla is evident through IHH**, a Turkish Islamic-oriented pro-Palestinian human rights organization (its full name is İnsani Yardım Vakfı). It is an NGO whose goal is to conduct operations in disaster areas to save lives and prevent violations of human rights. The organization operates in Arab and Muslim countries such as Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, and more. The organization was established in 1995 and is headed by **Bulent Yildirim**.



The organization's logo

2. **Hamas places considerable importance on the Turkish participation in the aid flotilla**, and it is no coincidence that Istanbul was chosen as the place where the organizations taking part in the flotilla held the press conference announcing their intentions (April 2). We believe that **Hamas thinks that the presence of Turkish ships and activists will thwart Israel's attempts to prevent the arrival of the flotilla, and can be used to (further) compromise Israel-Turkey relations.**

3. It should be noted that **IHH was formerly involved in sending aid to the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip.** On December 9, 2009, an aid convoy departed from Europe to the Gaza Strip by land and crossed Turkey on its way. IHH donated about 80 vehicles to the convoy to take the aid through Syria, Jordan, and Egypt to the Gaza Strip ([www.insaniyardim.ihh.org/tr](http://www.insaniyardim.ihh.org/tr), hereinafter: the IHH website).



Previous activities of the IHH organization in December 2009 (the organization's website, [www.insaniyardim.ihh.org.tr](http://www.insaniyardim.ihh.org.tr), April 7, 2010)

4. IHH was formerly banned in Israel. When some IHH activists landed in Ben Gurion Airport, they were denied entry.

## The organization's involvement in the flotilla of May 2010

5. IHH joined forces with several European pro-Palestinian organizations and pro-Palestinian activists from other countries to dispatch the flotilla in early May 2010, accompanied by a propaganda campaign (according to another version, the flotilla is expected to be launched in late April). The Islamic press in Turkey is engaged in intensive public relations activities ahead of the flotilla's departure. IHH director Bulent Yildirim and several other activists presented the goals of the flotilla and the media campaign at the press conference in Istanbul.



The press conference in Istanbul ([www.ihh.org.tr](http://www.ihh.org.tr), April 7, 2010)



Bulent Yildirim, the head of IHH ([www.ihh.org.tr](http://www.ihh.org.tr), April 7, 2010).

6. Following are the main issues discussed during the press conference:

a. According to Bulent Yildirim, **IHH has acquired a passenger ship able to accommodate 1080 passengers and a cargo ship with a capacity of 3,500 tons.** He said that the flotilla participants can remain on board the ships for months if Israel prevents them from reaching their destination. **He further added that the flotilla would be a test case for Israel. If it resists the flotilla, it will be considered a declaration of war on the countries from which the activists came.**

b. The campaign includes seven ships: two from Turkey, two from Britain, one from Greece, and one from Ireland. The purpose of the campaign is to support the Palestinian people and prove that Israel's arbitrary blockade is not recognized by the international community and that it may be broken using legal means, as well as to prove that it is possible to exert pressure on Egypt to open the Rafah crossing, and to transport humanitarian supplies.

c. The ships will carry medicines, medical supplies, cement, and iron. **Over 1,000 people will be on board the ships, including human rights lawyers, human rights activists, representatives from civilian organizations, journalists, and artists.**

d. **Ship owners refused to lease their ships to the flotilla and therefore it was decided to purchase ships for the organization.** So far, IHH has purchased two ships: a passenger ship and a cargo ship. The acquisition was funded by donations to the Palestinian fund. Mavi Marmara is a passenger ship purchased for 1,800,000 Turkish liras. The cargo ship was purchased for 850,000 Turkish liras.<sup>2</sup> The purchased ships will be used for other campaigns and subsequently will be donated to the Palestinians.



**Mavi Marmara, the passenger ship purchased for the flotilla (www.ihh.org.tr, April 7, 2010)**

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<sup>2</sup> According to another version, IHH said that it purchased a cargo ship in Istanbul whose name was changed to "Gaza". It was built in 1981 and **sails under Turkish flag** (IHH website, April 10).

e. The ship passengers will depart from Istanbul and sail to Gaza in international water. **They will make stops in the ports of Antalya, Kyrenia, and Famagusta.** Some of the cargo will be loaded **in Istanbul and some in the port of Mersin.** The journey will take 10-15 days, depending on weather and Israel's reaction.