



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

June 2, 2011

**Hamas initiates a media campaign  
against UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-  
moon because of his concerns regarding  
the flotilla. Hamas spokesmen and media  
accuse him of surrendering to Israeli  
pressure and call him responsible for the  
flotilla's safety.**



**Secretary-General**  
SG SM 13603

27 May 2011

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

**SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES MEDITERRANEAN GOVERNMENTS TO INFLUENCE CHANNELLING  
OF POTENTIAL GAZA AID FLOTILLAS THROUGH LEGITIMATE CROSSINGS**

The following statement was issued today by the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Secretary-General has sent a letter to Governments of countries around the Mediterranean Sea. In these letters, the Secretary-General indicated that he was following with concern media reports of potential flotillas to Gaza. He expressed his belief that assistance and goods destined to Gaza should be channelled through legitimate crossings and established channels. He recalled the statements of the Quartet on 21 June 2010 and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 13 April 2011 in this regard.

The Secretary-General called on all Governments concerned to use their influence to discourage such flotillas, which carry the potential to escalate into violent conflict. He further called on all, including the Government of Israel, to act responsibly and with caution to avoid any violent incident.

The Secretary-General reiterated that, while he believed that flotillas were not helpful in resolving the basic economic problems in Gaza, the situation there remains unsustainable. He urged the Government of Israel to take further meaningful and far-reaching steps to end the closure of Gaza, within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). In particular, he underlined that it was essential for the operation of legitimate crossings to be adequate to meet the needs of Gaza's civilian population.

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**The statement issued by the UN Secretary-General to Mediterranean governments expressing his concern that the flotilla might escalate into violent conflict (UN website, May 31, 2011).**

## Overview

1. The de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip and the pro-Palestinian organizations behind Freedom Flotilla 2 **expressed strong criticism of a communiqué sent by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the governments of Mediterranean countries**, including the government of Israel, regarding the upcoming flotilla (May 27, 2011).
2. The communiqué **called on the various governments to "use their influence to discourage" the flotillas, which had "the potential to escalate into violent conflict."** It said that the Secretary-General believed "the flotillas were not helpful in resolving the basic economic problems in Gaza" and that "assistance and goods...should be channeled through legitimate crossings and established channels." He called on the various governments, including the government of Israel, "to act responsibly and with caution to avoid any violent incident" (UN website May 27, 2011).
3. **The reservations of the UN communiqué joined many others issued by the international community.** They have been made public by the United States, the European Union and countries such as France, Spain, Denmark, Holland and Canada. The reservations, which were not expressed for the previous flotilla, may raise doubts, as far as Hamas and its allies are concerned, about the legitimacy of the flotilla and its objectives, and are also liable to strengthen the justification for steps Israel takes against it. **With that in view, Hamas initiated a media campaign attacking the UN Secretary-General, making him responsible for the safety of Freedom Flotilla 2.**

## Responses from Hamas and its allies

4. The following are the main responses from Hamas and its allies, as publicized by Hamas-affiliated media:

- 1) **Hamas' information office** issued a **statement denouncing the UN Secretary-General's appeal**. According to the statement, it was a "dangerous deviation" from the UN's founding principles, and the **Secretary-General's position set a dangerous precedent**. In addition, it continued, Hamas expected the Secretary-General not to surrender to Israeli pressure and to demand that Israel end the "siege" and support steps to transfer humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip (Hamas' Palestine-info website, May 28, 2011).

- 2) **Muhammad Awad, foreign minister of the de facto Hamas administration**, said that the UN had to act to ease the situation of the Palestinian people, to aid in lifting the "siege" and to appeal to other countries to do the same. He also said that the UN Secretary-General had a significant role to play in ending the "siege" and

rebuilding the Gaza Strip, and that he should not support the Israeli position (Al-Quds TV, May 28, 2011).

3) **The Popular Committee to Break the Siege on Gaza<sup>1</sup> issued a press release on the Hamas website** making Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon **responsible for the safety of Freedom Flotilla 2**. It emphasized that the UN Secretary-General's communiqué prepared the ground for "Israeli piracy" and **encouraged Israel to attack the flotilla as it had attacked in 2010**. It also stated that the Secretary-General's warning would not prevent the flotilla from sailing at its appointed time and **demanded that he protect the ships** (12, according to the release) and its passengers (Hamas' Palestine-info website, May 28, 2011).

4) **Rami Abdo**, a European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG) activist and one of the central figures organizing the flotilla, denounced the UN Secretary-General's appeal in a television interview. He said that the flotilla was a "popular activity" of civilian organizations and that governments could not prevent it from sailing (Hamas' Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, May 28, 2011).

5) **Zaher al-Birawi, Hamas activist living in Britain, who also serves as a spokesman for the International campaign to Break the Siege on Gaza, emphasized that the UN should protect the flotilla instead of inciting people against it**. He said that the organizations participating in the flotilla were willing to agree to have a UN monitoring committee supervise the cargoes loaded aboard their ships to verify that they were not endangering anyone (Hamas' Palestine-info website, May 29, 2011).

5. Hamas backed up the media campaign with a **protest demonstration of Gaza Strip** residents. Hundreds of Gazans participated in the demonstration, which was organized by a network of civilian groups and marked the first anniversary of the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla. During the demonstration people waved Palestinian and Turkish flags and shouted slogans denouncing Israel. **They demanded that the international community and the UN Secretary-General take serious steps to protect the upcoming flotilla** (Wafa News Agency, May 30, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> A Gazan organization headed by Hamas activist Jamal al-Khudari.



Maritime demonstration in the Gaza harbor to mark the anniversary of the Freedom Flotilla 1 (PIJ's Paltoday website, May 30, 2011).