



The Global Sumud ("Perseverance") Flotilla in the Service of Hamas September 4, 2025

Overview

- ▶ On August 31, 2025, the Global Sumud Flotilla set sail from Barcelona with the objective of “breaking the blockade on the Gaza Strip,” and to be joined by vessels from Italy and Tunisia. The organizers said they expected dozens of vessels carrying “thousands” of activists, the largest since Israel imposed the naval blockade on the Gaza Strip in 2007.
- ▶ The groups organizing the flotilla claimed they were independent and had no connection to any government or political party, but among the organizers was **the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, which was behind the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in 2010 and the voyages of the *Madeleine* and *Handala* in June and July 2025. One of the coalition’s leaders is Zaher Birawi, a Hamas -Muslim Brotherhood activist in Britain.**
- ▶ Among the participants are humanitarian activists and prominent celebrities whose inclusion is intended to strengthen the “independent” character of the flotilla, but there are also **Hamas supporters** who expressed support for the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, the organizers’ goal is to leverage the event to increase Israel’s diplomatic isolation and its negative media coverage to pressure it to end the war in the Gaza Strip. While the sources of the flotilla’s funding are unclear, the involvement of Hamas activists and its supporters, led by Zaher Birawi, indicated the possibility that the Hamas external leadership helped launch the flotilla as part of a broad anti-Israel propaganda and incitement campaign.**

Background

- ▶ On August 31, 2025, about 20 vessels left the port of Barcelona as part of the Global Sumud Flotilla, with more than 300 activists on board (Anadolu Agency, August 31, 2025). A day after the flotilla left Barcelona, inclement weather forced the vessels to return to port, but they set out again a few hours later (Reuters and Flotilla X account, September 1–2, 2025).



The Flotilla leaves Barcelona (Shahed TV Telegram channel, August 31, 2025)

►At the same time, several vessels left Genoa carrying about 300 tons of food and medical aid collected from all over Italy during the previous five days, and were scheduled to meet near Sicily with the vessels that left Barcelona. Another flotilla was to leave the port of Tunis on September 4, 2025, and join them in an attempt to reach the Gaza Strip in mid-September 2025 (al-Jazeera, August 31, 2025; Anadolu Agency, August 31, 2025).

►According to the organizers, more than 50 vessels with "thousands" of activists from 44 countries were expected to participate, the largest flotilla to Gaza since Israel began enforcing the naval blockade in 2007, after Hamas took over the Strip (Flotilla X account, September 1, 2025). The organizers also said that the current flotilla was a direct continuation of the *Mavi Marmara* Flotilla of 2010, and of the attempts to break the "blockade" which were foiled by Israel in recent months: the *Madeleine* in June 2025 and the *Handala* in July 2025 (Quds Press, August 31, 2025).

►Spain's Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said his government would provide Spanish citizens participating in the flotilla with "all necessary protection," in line with Spain's policy calling for free and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations to the Gaza Strip (Euronews, August 31, 2025).

The Flotilla Organizers and Their Connection to Hamas

►The flotilla was organized by a body called the Global Sumud Flotilla, which represents itself as an "independent, international group with no affiliation to any government or political party, committed to justice, freedom, and the sanctity of human life." The Flotilla's umbrella organization consists of four main groups: the World Movement to Gaza, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, the Maghreb Sumud Flotilla (activists from North Africa), and Sumud Nusantara

(activists from Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries (Flotilla website, September 1, 2025).



The Flotilla logo (Global Sumud Flotilla website)

► **The Freedom Flotilla Coalition** represents itself as a “people-to-people solidarity movement composed of campaigns and initiatives from different parts of the world working together to end Israel’s illegal blockade of Gaza.” **The Coalition had been involved in organizing flotillas to the Gaza Strip since 2007, up to the recent *Madeleine* and *Handala* sailings in June and July 2025** (Freedom Flotilla Coalition website, September 1, 2025). Organizations and **individuals identified with Hamas** are part of the Coalition:

- ◆ **The Turkish IHH**, a non-governmental organization with an Islamist-radical, anti-Israel, anti-Western bias, close to the Turkish government. It purchased the ships which participated in the *Mavi Marmara* Flotilla, which ended in a violent clash with Israeli Navy commandos on May 31, 2010. Investigation revealed that the IHH served as a direct conduit for transferring funds to finance Hamas’ military-terrorist wing, including for building a naval commando training facility and for purchasing equipment and weapons.¹

- ◆ **The International Committee to Break the Siege on Gaza**, a “Palestinian initiative to mobilize the international community to end Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip by peaceful means” (Committee’s Facebook page, September 2, 2025). The Committee is headed by **Zaher Khaled Hassan Birawi (Abu Khaled), a Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood**

¹ For further information, see the September 2010 in-depth ITIC report, [Conspicuous among the passengers and organizations aboard the Mavi Marmara were Turkish and Arab Islamic extremists led by IHH. They were joined by extremist European left activists and volunteers who answered the call to help the Palestinians in the Gaza](#), and the February 2025 report, [Turkey as a Center for Hamas Activity](#).

activist in Britain. He has held positions in organizations affiliated with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain, some of which were identified as financial conduits for Hamas. Birawi played a central role in organizing convoys and flotillas to the Gaza Strip, such as the *Mavi Marmara* Flotilla, including after the outbreak of the Gaza Strip War. He has said the success of the flotillas is not their arrival at Gaza’s shores but the media coverage they receive. Regarding the current flotilla, he said, “it is not a sea voyage but a humanitarian 'resistance' action against the crimes of the occupation” (Arabi21, August 30, 2025; Middle East Monitor, July 29, 2025).²



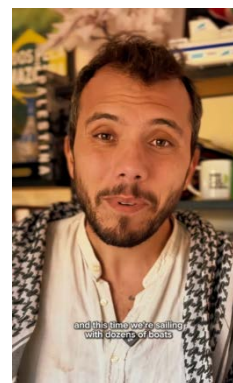
Zaher Birawi (Safa Agency, January 12, 2021)

Celebrities and Hamas Supporters Who Joined the Flotilla

►According to the organizers, the participants represent “a coalition of everyday people, organizers, humanitarian activists, doctors, artists, clerics, lawyers and seafarers” (Flotilla website, September 1, 2025). Among the celebrity participants are Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, Irish actor Liam Cunningham, Spanish actor Eduardo Fernández, and former Barcelona mayor Ada Colau (Anadolu Agency, August 31, 2025). However, **among the participants are also Hamas supporters who expressed open support for the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre:**

² For further information on Zahir Birawi and his activities, see the ITIC September 2017 report [A Hamas-affiliated Palestinian in Britain admitted the flotilla project to the Gaza Strip was not intended to “break the siege” and bring humanitarian aid, but rather to promote the battle for hearts and minds against Israel.](#) the November 2023 report, [Attempts to organize an aid flotilla to the Gaza Strip](#), and the December 2023 report, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/the-organizations-leading-the-pro-hamas-demonstrations-in-britain-since-the-outbreak-of-operation-iron-swords/>

◆ **Thiago Ávila**, a Brazilian internet activist and member of the Flotilla’s steering committee, who was aboard the *Madeleine* in June 2025, and was detained and deported from Israel. Ávila previously expressed support for Iran and Hezbollah. In February 2025, he went to Beirut to attend the funeral of Hezbollah’s former secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, whom he described as “one of the greatest figures in the region and in the history of the struggle against imperialism” (Mehr Press, February 22, 2025).



Right: Ávila in a promotional video for the Flotilla (Sumud Flotilla Instagram channel, August 10, 2025). Left: Ávila at the site of the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut (Rede Sul Global YouTube channel, February 22, 2025).

◆ **Wael Nawar**, a Tunisian citizen and member of the Flotilla’s steering committee. He was arrested and interrogated by the authorities in his own country after publicly expressing support for Hamas’ October 7, 2023 attack. He was also one of the organizers of Sumud Convoy, which left Tunisia with more than 1,500 volunteers in June 2025 but was blocked by the authorities in eastern Libya on its way to the Rafah crossing (Arab News, October 15, 2023; al-Arabiya, June 9, 2025).



Wael Nouar (right) (Libyan Observer Facebook page, June 16, 2025)