



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 18, 2011

Another Protest Ship Sails from Greece to Break Israel's Gaza Blockade

Early last week, a protest ship set off from Greece for the Gaza Strip to break Israel's blockade of Gaza. Reports from pro-Palestinian protesters indicate that the ship should arrive at the Hamas-run territory as early as today. The Blaze writes:

"Nahla Chahal said the ship, the [Dignity al-Karama](#), was expected reach Gaza by Monday unless the Israeli navy stops it. The ship was part of a larger protest flotilla that had hoped to break the blockade several weeks ago but was thwarted by Greece."

The ship, which left its port late Saturday, is carrying 16 passengers from France, Sweden, and Canada, as well as a correspondent from an Israeli newspaper and reporters from the Al-Jazeera satellite channel.



Chahal indicates that the purpose of the ship is to draw public attention to the situation in Gaza. "We are making a political statement[;] we are not carrying any aid," she said.

The Israel military is already prepared for the ship's arrival, indicating it will prevent any attempt to break the blockade of Gaza. Israel asserts that the blockade, which was imposed after Hamas militants took control of the territory in 2007, is of utmost importance in order to prevent the smuggling of weapons.

Critics of the blockade contend that whatever its intent, it also prevents the flow of necessary goods in and out of Gaza, penalizing the 1.6 million residents of the territory.

Last year, an international flotilla attempted to break the blockade, but Israeli forces managed to raid the ship. During the skirmish nine Turkish activists were killed. Both sides claim to have acted in self-defense.

News reports of the incident appeared to be biased, as many said that those onboard the so-called [Freedom Flotilla](#) were "peace activists." When Israeli forces raided the ship, however, they were confronted by men with knives, clubs, and other fatal implements. One member of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) was thrown overboard and suffered severe brain damage as a result.

While a number of news sources accused the IDF of unprovoked violence, the British newspaper *The Guardian* suggested otherwise: "Alex Harrison, a Free Gaza activist who was on the smaller *Challenger* yacht, which was crewed mainly by women, said the Israelis used rubber bullets, sound bombs, and tasers against them."

It became clear that the Freedom Flotilla's intent was less than peaceful when later reports revealed



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that the ships were offered the opportunity to send the supplies to Gaza overland, but that those behind the flotilla rejected that offer.

Many onboard the Freedom Flotilla are members of IHH, an Istanbul-based Islamic group, and Free Gaza, both of which have been tied to terrorist organizations such as Hamas.

Israeli forces are particularly on guard for the *Dignity al-Karama* as they have become aware of increased efforts to smuggle weapons into Gaza following the February overthrow of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

According to *The Blaze*, “The officials said armed groups in Gaza now possess some 10,000 rockets as well as anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. Some of the rockets can strike deep into Israel.”

Though the ship has reportedly set sail from a Greek port, Greece has actively pursued [efforts](#) to ensure that activists were unable to sail to the Gaza Strip from its national waters. Last month, Greece banned ships from leaving Greek ports for the Gaza Strip. Greece’s Civil Protection Ministry says the coast guard has been ordered to take “all appropriate measures” to monitor and track the movement of ships to the Gaza Strip. One ship — the *Audacity of Hope* — has already been seized and those on board arrested.

Photo: Passengers and coast guards are seen on the deck of a boat bound for Gaza, shortly after the boat was returned to the port by the coast guard in Agios Nikolaos, northeastern Crete, Greece on July 4, 2011: AP Images



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