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The Gaza Flotilla Incident: U.N. Inquiry Will Be an Anti-Israel Farce

Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., and James Phillips

In the aftermath of the recent gun battle aboard a Turkish aid ship heading for Gaza, international leaders have been queuing up to attack Israel. From Ankara to Brussels, the condemnation of the only longstanding democracy in the Middle East has been swift and unequivocal. The United Nations, the European Union, and the Arab League have all engaged in a frenzy of denunciation—even before all the facts have been established. Israel continues to be the U.N.’s favorite whipping boy: In the past four years, 33 of the 40 resolutions passed by the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC) have condemned Israel.

On June 2, the 47-nation Geneva-based HRC voted 32–3 to condemn “in the strongest terms the outrageous attack by the Israeli forces against the humanitarian flotilla of ships”¹ and called for an official investigation. The United States voted against the resolution alongside the Netherlands and Italy, with nine countries abstaining, including the U.K., France, Japan, and South Korea. The HRC, which replaced the hugely discredited U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 2006, has been even more egregious than its predecessor in some respects, and the newly elected membership includes some of the world’s worst human rights abusers, including China, Cuba, Libya, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. According to Freedom House, less than half the newly elected members (42.6 percent) can be classified as “free.”

The Obama Administration should boycott the U.N. inquiry into the flotilla incident, which is

highly likely to be a mirror image of the anti-Israeli 2009 Goldstone Commission report (“Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict”).

A Closer Look at the Gaza Flotilla Incident.

The Gaza flotilla incident was provoked by a motley crew of Turkish Islamists, European leftists, and Israeli Arab leaders determined to spark a conflict with the Israeli forces enforcing an arms embargo against Hamas terrorists. The foundation for the incident was laid when six ships with more than 600 “peace activists” left Cyprus bound for Gaza. Before these ships reached Gaza, they were intercepted by the Israeli navy and special forces commandos. The first five ships complied with Israeli forces, but the passengers aboard the sixth vessel, the *Mavi Marmara*, attacked Israeli commandos with steel poles, knives, and pepper spray, provoking a battle that claimed at least nine lives.

Caught off guard by the violent attacks of the “peace activists,” the Israeli commandos were compelled to use firearms in self-defense. Many of the passengers on board the *Mavi Marmara* were believed to be members of the Humanitarian Relief Fund, a Turkish charity organization that has a his-

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tory of supporting radical Islamist causes and deploying jihadists to Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya. It is part of the Union for Good, an umbrella group that was created by Hamas leaders in 2000 to raise money for Hamas's radical Islamist agenda. The U.S. government has designated the Union for Good as a terrorist organization.

The Biased Goldstone Commission. In September last year, the United Nations published a spectacularly biased, 575-page report accusing Israel of "war crimes" in Gaza and "possibly crimes against humanity." It was a prime example of the U.N. publishing a supposedly neutral report written by a panel of "experts" that included key members who had already reached their own conclusions well before the investigation had even begun.

The document far less forcefully criticized Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, choosing instead to place the overwhelming emphasis on Israel's actions. In effect, the U.N. established a dubious moral equivalence between the legitimate defensive measures of the Israeli security forces and the terrorist activities of groups such as Hamas that are deliberately targeting civilians.

The U.N.'s Gaza mission included Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, a country that does not even have formal relations with Israel. Jilani previously served as the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions and was a member of a 2004 U.N. panel of experts that controversially condemned Israel for its treatment of demonstrators in the Rafah refugee

camp. The panel also included Professor Christine Chinkin, a London School of Economics lecturer with very strong opinions on Israeli actions in Gaza. Chinkin signed on to a letter by 27 academics to *The Sunday Times* of London in January 2009² accusing Israel of a "war crime" in its offensive on Gaza.

The United States Must Defend Israel's Right to Self-Defense. Israel is on the front line of the war against Islamist terrorism and fights every day for its existence amidst a sea of hostility. The Israelis are engaged in a long-term war against vicious enemies and are a vital component of a global war the free world is waging against Islamists. The defeat of these terrorist organizations and the dictatorships that back them is in the fundamental national interest of the United States.

Washington must send a clear message that it will have no part in the U.N. investigation and will oppose any attempt by the U.N. to undermine Israel's sovereignty and its right to defend itself. The Obama Administration should also reconsider its wrongheaded decision to join the highly flawed HRC and look to establish a credible alternative human rights body outside of the U.N. system.

—*Nile Gardiner, Ph.D., is Director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom and James Phillips is Senior Research Fellow for Middle Eastern Affairs in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies, both divisions of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, at The Heritage Foundation. Erica Munkwitz assisted with research for this paper.*

1. United Nations Human Rights Council, "Action on Resolution on Attack by Israeli Forces Against the Humanitarian Boat Convoy," June 2, 2010, at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10095&LangID=E> (June 4, 2010).
2. Ian Brownlie *et al.*, "Israel's Bombardment of Gaza Is Not Self-Defence—It's a War Crime," *The Sunday Times*, January 11, 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/letters/article5488380.ece> (June 4, 2010).