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Rally Against Israeli Piracy Held in Winnipeg



Over 150 people rallied at the four corners of Broadway and Osborne on Friday, June 4 to oppose Israel's blockade of Gaza and its killing of nine human rights activists, part of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla (see editorial). A large banner proclaimed "Enough is Enough. End the blockade of Gaza. End Israeli Apartheid". Thousands of leaflets were handed out during the busy rush hour, and hundreds of passing cars honked in support. The rally was organized by Peace Alliance Winnipeg, Canada-Palestine Support Network-Winnipeg and Independent Jewish Voices.

Editorial

The World Must Put an End to Israeli Piracy and Terrorism

On May 30 the Israeli navy hijacked the six-vessel Gaza Freedom Flotilla in international waters. Israeli commandos boarded the Turkish vessel *MV Mavi Marmara*, the largest of the ships in the flotilla, killing at least nine activists and wounding over 60. Six activists are reportedly still missing. Activists

have reported that the commandos were dropped from helicopters and were shooting people as they landed on deck. Several of the slain were shot in the back of the head. The Israeli forces towed the ships to Israel and imprisoned the approximately 700

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Israel's Nuclear Double Standard

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, defending the criminal attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, told a CBC reporter that "Israel cannot be held to a higher standard than other nations." Indeed, according to Israel, it must be held to a much lower standard than other nations. Specifically, Israel claims that for security reasons, it cannot sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On May 29, Israel rejected a unanimous resolution by all 189 NPT signatories that it sign the pact and make its atomic facilities subject to inspection by the United Nations.

Israel, while never acknowledging openly it has nuclear weapons, is widely known to have a large stockpile of nuclear arms and is the only state in the Middle East which has not signed the NPT. According to a website funded by a pro-Israeli lobby organization, Israel's "nuanced" position on nuclear arms is necessary because "as long as Israel's security is under constant threat, Israel will not agree to a treaty that weakens its defence." The website further argues "Israel needs a strategic deterrence capability because it is surrounded by much larger neighbours that are hostile to its very existence. ..." Despite their very real security concerns, however, both Iraq and Iran, countries which have been subject to crippling sanctions, international threats and in the case of Iraq a U.S.-led invasion and

overthrow of its government, over their nuclear programs, have both signed the NPT.

The resolution also singled out Israel for participation in a 2012 conference that will discuss a nuclear free Middle East. Israel immediately rejected the idea, issuing an official statement declaring "As a non-signatory state of the NPT, Israel is not obligated by the decisions of this conference, which has no authority over Israel."

Instead of dealing with Israel's own nuclear arsenal, Netanyahu instead insisted the problem in the Middle East is the countries who have signed the NPT but who are somehow bamboozling international weapons inspectors and secretly developing their own nuclear weapons. The NPT does allow for the development of nuclear technology for civilian purposes, and despite the fear campaign against both Iran and Iraq, there is no evidence that either nation has been actively working to develop nuclear weapons. Indeed, the so-called evidence that Iraq was attempting to develop nuclear weapons that was used to justify the U.S. invasion in 2003 was found to be completely fraudulent.

Still, Netanyahu called the resolution and proposed conference "flawed" and "hypocritical", because it singled out Israel. It would almost be funny if it wasn't so ridiculous: it is Israel which has singled itself out by refusing to sign the NPT.

Gaza: Embargoed Items

Compiled by the Palestinian human rights organization, Gisha, the list below is of items prohibited from entering Gaza. Gisha notes the list is partial, approximate and changes. Gisha identifies items banned based on information from Palestinian traders and businesspeople, international organizations and the Palestinian Coordination Committee. However, some of the banned items are permitted in if they are for use by an international organization. Gisha notes: "It is not possible to verify this list with the Israeli authorities because they refuse to disclose information regarding the restrictions on transferring goods into Gaza."

Prohibited items:

| | |
|----------|-----------------|
| | Jam |
| Sage | Halva |
| Cardomam | Chocolate |
| Cumin | Fruit preserves |
| Ginger | Seeds and nuts |

See page 3: Prohibited Items

The Harper Government is Complicit With Israeli Crimes

A week after the Israeli commando raid on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla the government of Stephen Harper has still not condemned the crime. Its deafening silence speaks louder than words, confirming the fact that it is complicit with Israeli crimes against humanity, not only in this specific case, but in Israel's ongoing genocidal policy towards the people of Gaza. The Harper government was one of the first in the world to impose sanctions against the people of Gaza following the installation of the democratically-elected Hamas government. It refused to lift that embargo following Israel's military assault against Gaza last year and it was conspicuously silent in regard to Israel's deliberate targeting of schools and hospitals and its use of prohibited weapons, such as white phosphorous. It is now silent about Israel's hijacking of ships on the

high seas and the murder and kidnapping of peace activists.

It is interesting that the Harper government wasted no time condemning North Korea for the sinking of a South Korean warship, an act which increasingly appears to have been carried out by the Americans. However, it is supposedly waiting for all of the facts about an Israeli act about which there is absolutely no doubt as to either the perpetrators or the fact that it is a clear violation of international laws.

When leaders of national governments treat international law as a mere political consideration, to be enforced or not depending on whether the criminals are friends or foes, then the entire principle of international law goes down the drain. If international law can be so easily ignored, then we are reduced to the law of the jungle.

Prohibited Items...from page 2

Biscuits and sweets

Potato chips

Gas for soft drinks

Dried fruit

Fresh meat

Tar

Plaster

Wood for construction

Cement

Iron

Glucose

Industrial salt

Plastic/glass/metal containers

Industrial margarine

Tarpaulin sheets for huts

Fabric

Flavour and smell enhancers

Fishing rods, nets and ropes

Buoys

Nylon nets for greenhouses and ropes for use in greenhouses

Hatcheries and spare parts for hatcheries

Spare parts for tractors

Dairies and parts for cowsheds

Irrigation pipe systems

Planters for saplings

Heaters for chicken farms

Musical instruments

A4 paper

Writing implements and notebooks

Newspapers

Toys

Razors

Sewing machines and spare parts

Heaters

Horses

Donkeys

Goats

Chicks

Cattle

Israeli Piracy....from page 1

activists until they agreed to sign fraudulent statements that they had entered Israel illegally. A seventh ship, the *Rachel Corrie* was seized off the coast of Gaza on June 5 and towed to Israel as well.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Israeli actions constitute piracy on the high seas and violate international law, no matter how much Israel and its friends try to claim that Israel was the victim in this case. In particular, the fact that the purpose of the flotilla was to break the Israeli siege of Gaza does nothing to justify this atrocity. The siege of Gaza is, itself, in violation of international law, as is the Israeli occupation of both Gaza and the West Bank. The fact that Israel refuses to recognize or abide by international law because its American patrons shield it does not make its actions any less criminal.

Immediately after the killings, the office of Benjamin Netanyahu issued a statement that 40 of the peace activists were actually al Qaeda mercenaries who were heavily armed and initiated the violence, while the Israeli commandos, supposedly armed only with paint-ball guns, were forced to defend themselves. This is, of course, what the Israeli Defence Force routinely claims when its soldiers murder unarmed Palestinian civilians, so it comes as no surprise that this should be the first lie to come out of Tel Aviv in the wake of Israel's terrorist attack on the Freedom Flotilla. However, as the truth has slowly emerged, the Israeli government has been forced to backtrack on its claims. However, defenders of Israel continue to endlessly repeat the lie that one of the relief agencies taking part in the flotilla, the IHH, is connected to al Qaeda, despite the fact that both German and Turkish authorities have investigated that organization and have declared that it has no links to terrorist organizations of any kind.

If the Israeli act of piracy had been carried out by any other state, or by the Palestinians, there is no doubt that NATO warships would be steaming toward the area to punish the perpetrators. In fact,

the treaty obligates every member state to come to the aid of another member attacked by a non-member. The Turkish government has demanded NATO action and has declared that any state which refuses to condemn Israel's actions to be complicit. However, the Americans have so far blocked any involvement of NATO forces and U.S. president Obama has pointedly refused to criticize Israel for the attack, merely "regretting" the violence. Some supporters of Israel have suggested that even that gesture is an insult to Israel and that Israel now has no choice but to launch pre-emptive air strikes against Iran.

Israel apparently believes that it can commit murder anywhere in the world and get a free pass because of the crimes committed against Jews during the Holocaust. However, world public opinion has been rapidly turning against Israel, first because of its brutal and genocidal attacks on Gaza last year and now because of its murderous assault on peace activists on the high seas. It is time for world leaders to stop their complicity in the crimes committed by Israel and demand that Israeli political and military leaders be charged with crimes against humanity.

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