

5 June 2010

Ship Attempting to Break Maritime Closure of Gaza Strip Boarded by Israel Naval Forces with Compliance of Crew

IDF naval commandos boarded the ship attempting to break the maritime closure of the Gaza Strip a short while ago with the full compliance of the ship's crew members. According to initial reports, there was no violence or injuries amongst the soldiers or the crew, as the use of force was unnecessary and no shots were fired.

The boat and its crew are being led to the Ashdod port and will be transferred to the custody of the appropriate authorities.

During the morning hours a naval force identified the ship and, as it did in the past, issued numerous calls for it to dock in Ashdod and transfer the goods via the crossings upon inspection. The calls were ignored and it became clear that the boat intended to reach Gaza's shores. The Israel Navy contacted the boat and clarified again that the Gaza Strip was under maritime closure and due to security risks in the area, it would not be permitted to enter.

A short while ago, with the compliance of the crew members, the naval force boarded the ship without incident under the command of the Commander of the Israel Navy, Vice Admiral Eliezer Marom, and is now directing it to the Ashdod port.

Any organization or country wishing to transfer humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip can do so legally via the established ground crossings by coordinating with the relevant authorities, as is done on a near daily basis.

The closure of the Gaza Strip prevents the smuggling of arms to the Hamas terror organization and ensures the security of vessels traveling in the area.

It should be noted that Hamas has refused to allow any of the aid carried by the other six flotilla ships into the Gaza Strip thus far. Five days have passed since trucks were loaded with cargo and were ready to enter Gaza.

The rules of warfare allow the capturing of naval vessels prior to their actual violation of a naval blockade. This is dependent on the vessels being on their way to a blockaded area, being outside the territorial waters of neutral states and when there is a substantial likelihood (based on credible evidence) that the vessels intend to violate the blockade.

Declarations by the flotilla's organizers and their reactions to the messages that were transmitted to them during their approach clearly show that they had intended to break the naval blockade, thus allowing for the steps taken by IDF forces.