

Activists Challenge Israeli Lawlessness

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For decades, Israel has literally gotten away with murder. Crimes of war and against humanity repeat regularly. Human and civil rights are spurned.

Anyone not experiencing it firsthand can't imagine the ruthlessness of occupation harshness. Besieged Gazans suffer most. For over five years, they've been lawlessly isolated and suffocated.

Former Ariel Sharon associate, Dov Weissglass, once said, "The idea is to put Palestinians on a diet, but not make them die of hunger." In other words, make them suffer. Francis Boyle, Ilan Pappé, this writer, and others call it slow-motion genocide.

Call it anything you like but understand what's going on. Why else would activists risk life and limb to help. No one pays them. They're given nothing in return. They're involved because it's important to help.

They're true heroes. Only friends, family, and supporters know them. Media scoundrels ignore them. Ship to Gaza Sweden (Estelle) activists are some of the best.

They knew the risks but took them. In international waters, Israeli commandos attacked them. In custody they were harshly treated. Their humanitarian cargo, personal possessions, and vessel were confiscated.

They were kidnapped and imprisoned for several days. Israel brutalized them for doing the right thing.

They're now free, either heading home, or perhaps there resting and recovering from their ordeal. Israel never makes it easy. That's how rogue states operate.

Gush Shalom works for peace, reconciliation, ending Israel's occupation, and sovereign Palestine within pre-1967 borders. On October 22, its [press release](#) headlined "Israeli activists detained on the 'Estelle' released," saying:

"Elik Elhanan: excessive force was used against us, without any reason"

"Electric shocks by taser out of vengeful hatred"

"A Greek MP was beaten by Shabak Security Service interrogators"

Perhaps once activists can speak freely we'll learn more. Everyone Israel detains gets harsh treatment. It's standard practice. Virtually every Palestinian imprisoned is tortured or abused. Children young as 10 (and sometimes younger) are treated like adults.

Arrested Palestinian supporters also taste Israeli harshness. Activist Jews are treated like enemies.

On Monday, Israeli Estelle participants Elhanan, Yonatan Shapira and Reut Mor were freed on bail. They still face likely recrimination. Prosecutors wanted the book thrown at them.

Beersheba District Court Judge Yael Raz-Levi threw out the harshest charges. They're still vulnerable to conviction on trying to breach Gaza's siege. Doing so, of course, is heroic, not criminal.

Peace activists greeted the three Israelis on release. Elhanan said he and others went "through difficult days." They didn't regret sailing and knew what they'd likely face.

"During the voyage I made a special contact with Evangelis, a Member of the Greek Parliament who sailed with us," said Elhanan.

"When the Naval Commandos came aboard and while we were blocking their way to the bridge, Evangelis told me we have generated in him a love for the people of Israel and a hope for a better future in the Middle East."

"Shortly afterwards they separated us. Yesterday evening, when they put (former Israeli citizen initially separated from the others) Dror Feiler in our cell, he told us that Evangelis had been beaten by the Shabak interrogators."

"The Shabak lied shamelessly to the Consuls and representatives of foreign countries, telling them that their citizens and MPs were being treated well."

"They used a completely disproportional amount of force against us. When the Navy arrived to take us over, Yonatan Shapira counted no less than fifteen vessels surrounding us on all sides."

"Large and small ships and boats, a ship carrying a helicopter, as well as the Zodiacs of the Naval Commandos. Fifteen armed naval vessels against one small civilian boat carrying games for the children of Gaza. We must have disturbed very much the Navy and those who give orders to the Navy."

"When they came aboard and we blocked their way, the soldiers knew exactly who I was. They shouted in Hebrew: 'Elhanan, you will pay for your Leftism!' and used the taser to give me electric shocks."

"Even after they completed their takeover of the boat, they continued to use the taser and administer more shocks. But if they think they could deter me and those who sailed with me, they are mistaken. The siege of Gaza is an ongoing crime and it must be ended. We will continue the struggle."

Everyone trying to breach Gaza's siege feels the same way. They're committed for justice, nothing less. Many say they'll return on future missions.

The latest Ship to Gaza Sweden [\(Estelle\)](#) communique said:

"According to Ship to Gaza's Israeli lawyers, all remaining activists are being deported

tomorrow morning (Wednesday) at 4.30 AM. The Swedish activists are expected to arrive at Arlanda airport at 3PM.”

“Videos from the attack on the Estelle”

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“When the activists are returning to their countries, other pictures of the event when the Estelle was attacked unfold. Partly through oral testimonies, partly through photos and videos that the activists managed to smuggle with them.”

Videos below show some of their ordeal. More will follow:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnH3LxiKJ3M&feature=youtu.be>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M36iarLHka0>

On October 23, GazaArk.org said Jim Manly, former Canadian parliamentarian and retired United Church Minister, is free. He’s heading home. He’ll arrive in Toronto Wednesday morning.

Israel kidnapped him like other Estelle activists. All of them were treated harshly. Smuggled video footage above shows Israeli navy vessels surrounding Estelle.

On October 24, the [Jerusalem Post](#) headlined “Video: ‘Estelle’ taunts IDF before being boarded,” saying:

“You are a pirate,” shouted one activist. “You are a war criminal,” he added. Video was sent home by homing pigeon. Those gotten out showed events before Israel commandos boarded Estelle.

Israeli navy radioed activists in English, saying:

“Estelle, this is the Israeli navy.” Video showed approaching Israeli vessels. A military helicopter flew overhead.

“The Gaza area and coastal region are closed to all maritime traffic as part of the maritime blockade imposed for security purposes on the Gaza Strip.”

Israel’s blockade has nothing to do with security. It’s collective punishment for economic and other reasons. Israel openly admits it.

“Your attempts to enter the Gaza Strip are a violation of international law.”

Breaching Gaza’s siege, of course, is legal and heroic. Enforcing it is lawless.

“We remind you that humanitarian supplies may be delivered to the Gaza Strip by land.”

False! Israel routinely confiscates everything on its exclusion list. Most humanitarian supplies activists bring are blocked.

“You are welcome to enter the Ashdod port and deliver the supplies through the recognized land crossings.”

False again! Moreover, interdicting nonbelligerent vessels in international waters is piracy. Gaza’s coastal waters belong to Palestine, not Israel.

Activists were warned that failure to obey Israel’s orders meant “preventive measures” would follow. In other words, they’d be subjected to events that unfolded.

“You are responsible for the consequences of your actions.”

Activists proudly and courageously try to help. Preventing them violates international law.

Estelle’s captain responded: “We are a normal trading vessel. Gaza is a free state.”

“I hope you do not do anything illegal on the international waters, and we can have this solved in a peaceful way.”

An activist then yelled: “They are coming. Ring the bell.” Another shouted at Israeli soldiers as they prepared to board: “Disobey your commanders.” Participants charged Israel with excessive force during boarding, arrest, and detention.

Knowing their electronic equipment and other possessions would be confiscated, “activists placed sim cards into the bands of homing pigeons that were on board the 53-meter ship.”

Bombing Gaza Accompanies High-Seas Piracy

On and off for days, Israeli warplanes bombed Gaza. A dozen or more civilians were killed. Many others were wounded. Media scoundrels reported nothing.

Since October 22, six more Palestinians died. Another 12 were wounded. Areas east of Rafah city were targeted. So was As-Salateen in Gaza’s northwest.

An Israeli missile destroyed a power grid. Outages affected several areas. Az-Zetoun neighborhood, east of Gaza City, was also attacked. No casualties were reported.

Hamas said Israeli tanks shelled Gaza. These type attacks happen often. Six Khan Younis schools were evacuated to protect children.

Gazans live in a war zone. No one knows from day to day who’ll live, die, or remain unharmed. Children are as vulnerable as adults.

Netanyahu is an unindicted war criminal. He warned of more to come, saying: “We will fight and we will hit them very, very hard.” He and IDF spokesmen refer to homemade rockets and mortars fired from Gaza at Israel.

Never explained is that they always follow Israeli attacks. It’s done defensively. Doing so is legal, justified, and important to show Palestinians won’t tolerate Israeli aggression.

Israel calls self-defense terrorism. Anyone paying attention and aware of conditions knows

otherwise.

With January elections approaching, Netanyahu is in campaign mode. Acting tough is strategy to win votes. Cast Lead preceded Israel's February 2009 legislative elections.

Only the fullness of time will tell if Netanyahu plans more war as a way to remain prime minister. He governs lawlessly. Put nothing past him. Gazans know they're vulnerable to Cast Lead 2.0. It could happen any time.

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