

## Before this is Over, Israel Will Apologize

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Israel has become Myanmar on the Jordan. Every new act of violence deepens the paranoia, the resentment, the isolation. The killing of 9 peace activists aboard the Mavi Marmara was celebrated in Tel Aviv—another blood victory against the terrorists, another triumph against those who would harm Israel. Heads of state around the world have condemned the butchery, but Israelis have shrugged off the criticism. They think that support for the activists is anti-Semitism. They think that food and medicine are weapons that will be used by Hamas against Israel. This is madness, but madness has consequences. Nine people are dead.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has used the massacre to bolster his flagging popularity. He's shifted the focus from killing protesters to defending embattled Israel. Israelis must stand united against this new enemy—Netanyahu believes—this global propaganda onslaught. But the Israeli PM is just strengthening widespread feelings of persecution and reinforcing bunker mentality.

Peace activists aren't anti-Semites or terrorists. If the tables were turned—and 1.5 million Jews were trapped in the Gaza's Hell-hole instead of Muslims— these same activists would have come to their aid. They put themselves at risk because they believe in their cause; because they believe in justice.

Here's a clip from an article by Professor Ilan Pappé in the Independent:

"One would have thought that Israel's drastic decline in international reputation would prompt new thinking by its leaders. But the responses to the attack on the flotilla in the past few days indicate clearly that there is no hope for any significant shift in the official position. A firm commitment to continue the blockade, and a heroes' welcome to the soldiers who pirated the ship in the Mediterranean, show that the same politics would continue for a long time.

This is not surprising. The Barak-Netanyahu-Avigdor Lieberman government does not know any other way of responding to the reality in Palestine and Israel. The use of brutal force to impose your will and a hectic propaganda machine that describes it as self-defence, while demonizing the half-starved people in Gaza and those who come to their aid as terrorists, is the only possible course for these politicians. The terrible consequences in human death and suffering of this determination do not concern them, nor does international condemnation." ("The deadly closing of the Israeli mind" Ilan Pappé, The Independent)

Paranoid, resentful, isolated.

On Saturday, the Rachel Corrie was seized without incident. There was no violence and the passengers were not mistreated. This is proof that the killing aboard the Mavi Marmara was intentional. The Israeli high-command wanted to discourage other groups from trying to break the blockade in the future. They decided that shooting a few peaceniks would “do the trick”. It was all part of a political calculation that backfired.

Israel was caught off-guard by the the diplomatic firestorm that followed the massacre. Harsh criticism has come from all quarters. Ecuador has recalled its ambassador and Nicaragua has cut off all diplomatic ties with Israel. In his weekly radio broadcast, Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez has called Israel a “genocidal state” and expressed his condolences to the family and friends of the “heroes who were victims of this crime.”

Chavez added, “The revolutionary government of Venezuela will continue denouncing the terrorist and criminal nature of the Israeli government and reiterates... its unshakable commitment with the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, national sovereignty and dignity.”

A day after the attack, the IDF’s Press Office issued this statement: “In a special meeting of the Security Cabinet it was disclosed that a group of 40 people on board the Mavi Marmara with no identification papers belong to Al Qaeda. The terrorists were equipped with bullet proof vests, night-vision goggles and weapons.” (“How Israel planned the Flotilla Attack”, Real News Network)

All lies. No Al Qaeda, no terrorists, no plan to hurt Israel. Just food, medicine, cement and vital supplies.

President Barack Obama has neither defended the peace activists nor criticized Israel’s killing-spree. An American citizen, 19-year old Furkan Dogan, was shot in the head four times at point-blank range by Israeli paramilitaries, but Obama remains silent. If Martin Luther King had been assassinated on Obama’s watch, Obama would have opined, “The United States believes that James Earl Ray has the right to defend himself”.

In contrast to Obama’s cowardice, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan plans to sail to Gaza in order to break Israel’s blockade. The Israeli government is in a panic. Here’s an excerpt from The Australian:

“Israel would allow Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan to break the Gaza blockade if he acted on a threat to join a protest boat, the Israeli Foreign Ministry told The Australian last night.

It would be the first boat to pass through the blockade since Israel began enforcing it with its navy three years ago. In a remarkable decision, Israel has ruled out risking a high-seas confrontation with the Turkish leader.” (“Turkish PM Recep Erdogan puts Israel in a bind”, John Lyons, The Australian)

Turkey just raised the stakes and Israel is looking for a way to stand down. Before this is over, Israel will apologize.

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