

# **BREAKING NEWS: Humanitarian Ship to Gaza is a Floating Prison: Cairo is Obeying Orders from Tel Aviv**

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)  
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*Below is the transcript of my interview on March 23 with Press TV, which focuses on the decision by Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs to allow the ship to berth and unload its humanitarian cargo in the port of al Arish.*

Egypt has broken its promise.

It has not allowed the Spirit of Rachel Corrie to berth and unload its cargo in the Port of Al-Arish.

The Spirit of Rachel Corrie remains stranded in Egyptian territorial waters.

It has become a "floating Prison"

Egypt's Foreign Minister Nabil Al Arabi had made a firm commitment in this regard.

Who is calling the shots in Cairo?

Israel and Egypt collaborate in policing the Gaza border in the context of a bilateral agreement. According to confirmed sources, Military Intelligence, no doubt in consultation with Tel Aviv and Washington, prevented the implementation of the commitment by Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Military Intelligence is attached to the Ministry of Defense headed by *Mohamed Hussein Tantawi Soliman who is the commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces and de facto head of State.*

In turn, Hussein Tantawi is a permanent liaison with his counterpart in Tel Aviv, Ehud Barak, as well as with Defense Secretary Robert Gates in Washington.



**Mohamed Hussein Tantawi Soliman with Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak (February 2011)**



**Mohamed Hussein Tantawi Soliman with Defense Secretary Robert Gates**

**Michel Chossudovsky's interview with Press TV on Egypt's Foreign Minister's resolve to lift the Gaza Blockade**

The freedom flotilla aid ship MVFinch has received approval to dock in an Egyptian port giving further encouragement for the opening of borders into Gaza.

Press TV talks with Michael Chossudovsky, Director for the Center of Research on Globalization in Montreal who is in touch with the ship and is very optimistic about humanitarian materials getting through due to the actions taken by Egyptian authorities. Following is a transcription of that interview.

**Press TV:** Tell us about the latest news that you've been getting on the conditions of the people on board the ship and where they are right now?

**Michael Chossudovsky:** I've been in touch with the ship permanently for the last six or seven hours and the latest news is quite encouraging because we were told that they would be refused the right to berth at the Port of El-Arish and the ship took the decision to try to enter Gaza through Egyptian territorial waters and we have just learnt — and it's a very important decision — that the (Egyptian) Minister of Foreign Affairs el-Arabi, who actually met with his counterpart, the minister for foreign affairs of Malaysia, has granted the ship the right to berth tomorrow and to unload its cargo, which is destined for Gaza.

This is a historic decision because Foreign Minister Nabil el-Arabi less than a month ago made the commitment that the blockade would be lifted and that the border crossing at Rafah would be opened up; in other words reversing the 2007 agreement reached with the Israelis. And it seems that this decision with regards to the spirit of the Rachel Corrie (MV Finch) is historical because it means that the blockade is in the process of being broken.

We don't know what will happen tomorrow; we will keep you posted as to the shipment of pipes, which are intended for the refurbishment or reconstruction of the sewerage system of Gaza.

I must say that this does look like a major turnaround in Egyptian foreign policy, which is fundamental and will affect the entire relationship between Israel, Egypt and the Arab world in the days to come.

**Press TV:** This is good news for those on board the aid ship. Tell us about the people who are in this convoy and where are they coming from; what type of people are they; and why did they initially make the decision to go ahead with this trip?

**Michael Chossudovsky:** This ship is an initiative by the Perdana Global Peace Foundation, which is chaired by the former prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad. It is a follow up from last years' initiative, which was also called the Rachel Corrie and as you may recall last year the Rachel Corrie was the last boat to confront the Israeli authorities and its crew and members were arrested and deported by Israel.

This ship (on the latest trip) is somewhat of a different nature: first of all the Israelis were taken totally by surprise with advanced communications technology and radar. When the ship approached the Gazan coastline they were undetected and it was only when the ship was within a mile of the coastline that the Israelis actually saw it.

They intervened and they started shooting at them; they almost killed the captain; it was a very aggressive act on their part. And then what happened was that the ship went back into Egyptian territorial waters and was escorted by the Egyptian navy and then it was stranded for seven days as we know.

I think the objective is two-fold: one is to bring humanitarian materials to Gaza, but more importantly it's also to break the blockade so that the normal flow of people, aid and trade can proceed through by both land and by sea. And that is absolutely fundamental.

Our research center is part of that initiative and there is one Canadian member of our team who is on board.

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