

BREAKING NEWS: Israel's Attack on Humanitarian Ship to Gaza.

Updated Report

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

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The Spirit of Rachel Corrie (officially known as FINCH) carrying a humanitarian cargo to Gaza was attacked by an Israeli naval patrol within the so-called Palestinian Security Zone on May 15, at 10.54pm EDT.

In the course of the last few hours, Global Research has communicated several times with the Rachel Corrie vessel en route to Gaza. What is provided below is a detailed update. [An earlier article was posted at 12.30am EDT](#)

The vessel left the Greek Port of Piraeus, on Wednesday, May 11. The humanitarian initiative is sponsored by the Perdana Global Peace Foundation (PGPF), chaired by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad.

Participating in this mission are anti-war activists and journalists, consisting of 7 Malaysians, 2 Irish, 2 Indians and 1 Canadian. The Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG) is a partner in this endeavor. Global Research's Julie Lévesque is on board the Rachel Corrie:

The cargo ship The Spirit of Rachel Corrie (officially known as FINCH) is carrying 7.5 kilometers of UPVC (plastic) sewage pipes to help restore the devastated sewerage system in Gaza. The ship was named after the courageous American activist who was crushed and killed by an Israeli bulldozer in 2003 while trying to prevent the demolition of another Palestinian home. She died at 23. (Perdana's Second Press Release, [Nakba and the Spirit of Rachel Corrie: Humanitarian Ship Attacked by Israel now within 1.5 nautical miles of Gazan Waters](#) Global Research, May 16, 2011)

The Spirit of Rachel Corrie entered Gazan waters without being detected.

The Israeli navy with its radar equipment and advanced communications technology was unaware of the Spirit of Rachel Corrie Mission.

They were unprepared. They had received no prior information of the Rachel Corrie Mission, which had been planned for several months, scheduled to arrive off the coast of Gaza on the day of the "Nakba" commemoration.

Ironically, Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency was unaware of this mission. The Israeli navy vessels acted in an improvised fashion, without prior knowledge or intelligence. There was no indication that they had received precise instructions from the Israeli government.

At the time of the attack, the passengers on board were under the impression that the ship was still in international waters, when in fact it was one mile inside the “Palestinian Security zone”, namely in Gaza territorial waters, within a short distance of the Gaza coastline. This was an important accomplishment.

Indicated below is the initial report sent to Global Research by text message:

At 10.54 pm Eastern Time (EDT), the Spirit of Rachel Corrie was intercepted by an Israeli ship and an Egyptian ship in international waters [correction: within Gaza Territorial waters]

10:54pm EDT, Gaza 5:54am: We have been intercepted by Israeli ship and Egyptian ship. We are disobeying the orders and sailing ahead to Gaza.

10:57pm EDT, Gaza 5:57am: One Israeli warship coming to us very fast! We are in international waters, therefore they have no right to attack us. We are still sailing ahead.

10:59pm EDT, Gaza 5:59am: They are opening fire across our ship! We are still sailing ahead.

11:09pm EDT, Gaza 6:09am: They are shooting all over the place. We can't continue ...

11:35pm EDT, Gaza 6:35am: They circled our ship twice and fired across our ship. Machine guns. No one was injured. One of the fishing nets caught the propeller, so we can't move now.

11:37pm EDT, Gaza 6:37am: The Israeli ship was coming from one end and the Egyptian ship was coming from another end. Firing. We are just stalled now. Everybody is okay. No one is injured.

Two Israeli naval vessels initially launched a “warning attack” on the Rachel Corrie, indicating that if the ship did not change course, they would shoot at the crew and the passengers. One of the passengers was almost killed as a result of the attacks. (See Bernama, May 16, 2011)

The following exchange took place between the Israeli navy and the ship as reported by the Free Malaysia Today journalist on board the Spirit of Rachel Corrie:

“Israeli army: This is a warning shot. Turn around.

Captain Jalil Mansor: We are unarmed civilians on a humanitarian mission to Gaza.

Israeli army: This is a closed military zone. It's a violation. Turn around.

Mansor: We will continue (the mission).

The Israelis then headed to the back of the aid vessel and released a second warning shot into the air.

Graham: This is a violation (of international law). We are on a peaceful mission and unarmed.

Israeli army: Turn around. We will fire again.

Graham: You are firing towards unarmed civilians.

Israeli army: We didn't fire towards unarmed civilians.

Graham: Looks like firing towards us.

Israeli army: We didn't fire towards you. That is only a warning shot.

Following that conversation, the Israeli army fired two more shots and threatened: "Next time, we will land on your ship."

Then the Egyptian navy was heard telling the Israelis on the radio: "Stop firing. They are in Egyptian waters."

Upon realising the presence of Egyptian naval forces, the Israelis departed." (Free Malaysia Today, <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/2011/05/16/israel-fires-warning-shots-at-msian-ship/> May 16, 2011)

The Egyptian navy guard was initially unaware of what was occurring. The Israeli navy contacted the Egyptian navy and initially got no response.

Our earlier report (filed at 12.30am) following communication with the ship shortly after midnight (March 16) pointed to cooperation between the Israeli navy and their Egyptian counterparts. While there was cooperation, the Egyptians played a supportive role, which served to appease the Israeli attacks. They also ensured the escorting of the Spirit of Rachel Corrie into Egyptian territorial waters.

The Israeli Navy had contacted the Spirit of Rachel Corrie. They were informed regarding the nature of the cargo and that the crew and passengers were unarmed civilians.

The warning attack was aggressive using automatic weapons. Two Israeli naval patrol boats armed with machine guns were deployed. The Israelis also opened fire on a Palestinian fishing boat which was within Gazan territorial waters.

Following the initial "warning attack" they ordered the Spirit of Rachel Corrie to turn back. "Turn around or we'll shoot". However, once the ship changed course as demanded by the Israeli commando, they continued firing on the ship: "They started shooting to kill"

The Egyptian navy ship while communicating with the Israeli Navy was instrumental in escorting the ship to safe haven. The crew of the Egyptian ship was supportive in ensuring the safety of the crew and passengers of the humanitarian vessel.

There was communication between the Israeli and Egyptian ships and the Israeli's "thanked" the Egyptian ship for having intervened.

The Spirit of Rachel Corrie, its crew and passengers are now in Egyptian territorial water, anchored off the Egyptian port of Al Arish, within a short distance of Gaza territorial waters.



It is essential at this stage to mobilize Worldwide in support for the Spirit of Rachel Corrie, break the blockade, open up Gazan territorial waters to aid and trade and also use this opportunity to open the land border between Egypt and Gaza.



The humanitarian convoy is of significance in the process of rehabilitation of Gaza's public health infrastructure including its sewage system which was partially destroyed by Israeli bombings under Operation Cast Lead:

On 27 December 2008, the Israeli military launched Operation Cast Lead, which not only killed some 1400 Palestinians, but also destroyed vital infrastructure leaving the Gazans with critical water and sewage problems. Repair of the infrastructure has proved impossible as Israel has prevented the entry of construction materials and fuel to resolve this dire situation.

According to a report from the Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene group (EWASH), "the release of 80 million litres of untreated or partially

treated sewage into the environment and Mediterranean Sea each day is primarily a result of the Israeli imposed blockade on the Gaza Strip.”

Gaza, one of the world’s most densely populated areas, is currently dealing with serious health issues such as the blue baby syndrome, diarrhea and other waterborne diseases like typhoid and hepatitis A. The World Health Organization is warning of a possible cholera epidemic if nothing is done rapidly to resolve this sanitation crisis.

According to Physicians for Human Rights-Israel: “Between 90% and 95% of the aquifers in the Gaza Strip are not safe for drinking.” The primary cause of the current problem originates from the destruction, during Operation Cast Lead, of “20 kilometers of water pipes, 7.5 kilometers of sewage pipes and 5,700 mobile water tanks”.

While the Gazans are experiencing the dramatic environmental impacts of the sewage and water crisis, the effects have already reached the Israeli shores, and could spread further affecting neighbouring countries. This severe health and environmental issue needs to be dealt with urgently. The international community must demand that the illegal Israeli blockade be lifted.

The Spirit of Rachel Corrie Mission stemmed from PGFP’s participation in the Freedom Flotilla in 2010, in which 9 activists were killed by Israeli commandos. Following a fact finding mission conducted in Gaza in October 2010, PGPF decided to continue its efforts to assist Palestinians and shows this project as the most immediate of all priorities. See Perdana’s Second Press Release, [Nakba and the Spirit of Rachel Corrie: Humanitarian Ship Attacked by Israel now within 1.5 nautical miles of Gazan Waters](#)0777 646 2379, Global Research, May 16, 2011)

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