

Canadians Released by Israel Following Unlawful Detention

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Montreal, November 9, 2011 — David Heap and Ehab Lotayef are expected to be released and deported back to Canada today after spending 5 days in an Israeli prison. The two Canadian activists were arrested last Friday in international waters while they were on board the Canadian boat to Gaza (CBG). They are expected to arrive at Toronto's Pearson Airport early tomorrow morning. Both men appeared in court on Tuesday where a judge initially threatened to keep them incarcerated for up to two months without charges or trial if they did not sign a statement saying that they had entered Israel "voluntarily" and "illegally." A third Canadian, Karen DeVito was released late Tuesday night.

In a letter released on Monday, Heap said that he had suffered abuse at the hands of Israeli authorities, saying he was tasered and bruised and as a result was limping. American Journalist Jihan Hafiz who was on the CBG, and was also arrested despite her press credentials, said that those on the boat were "assaulted, tasered, beaten, kidnapped, robbed, and imprisoned." The response from the Canadian government so far has avoided holding Israel accountable for the arrests and mistreatment. John Babcock, a spokesman for Diane Ablonczy, minister of State of Foreign Affairs, said in an email that "We have strongly and repeatedly urged against participating in any provocative attempt to break the naval blockade and any who participate despite warnings should be prepared to assume the risks involved."

"We are relieved to hear that both David and Ehab will be released and sent back to Canada. Israel's detention of these two men violated their habeas corpus rights. It is highly unethical that Israel would even consider detaining these men for days, weeks or months without charges", says Thomas Woodley, President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME). CJPME encourages the Canadian government to intervene promptly and decisively when Canadians are unlawfully arrested, detained or tortured in a foreign country. CJPME reminds the Canadian government that the CBG was on a non-violent mission to deliver aid to Gaza.

Israel has maintained a blockade of Gaza since June, 2007. This blockade violates international law because it prevents access of goods to the civilian population of Gaza. On Friday November 4th, Israeli Navy commanders boarded both the Canadian (Tahrir) and the Irish (Saoirse) boats taking part in the Freedom Waves to Gaza initiative. The boats attempted to break the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza by bringing a symbolic cargo of \$30,000 worth of medicine to the Gaza Strip. The raid occurred about 35 nautical miles from the coast, in international waters.

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