

Freedom Flotilla to Gaza: Most Participants Still in Prison: Grave Concern for Safety and Cargo

By [Freedom Flotilla Coalition](#)

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Two people from Al Awda (The Return) have been released, but most of the crew and participants are still in unlawful detention at Givon prison in Israel. We are still gravely concerned for their safety and well-being as we had no contact with most of them as of 14:00 CEST today. We continue to demand that our boat and the medical supplies on board reach their rightful recipients, Palestinian civil society in Gaza.

Although the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) claim that the capture of our vessel happened ‘without exceptional incident’, eye-witness Zohar Chamberlain Regev reports that at the time of boarding: “People on board were tasered and hit by masked IOF soldiers. We did not get our passports or belongings before we got off the boat. Do not believe reports of peaceful interception.” We urgently need to know the details of who was injured and how seriously, and what treatment they are receiving, if any. A military attack on a civilian vessel is a violent act and a violation of international law. Taking 22 people from international waters to a country which is not their destination constitutes an act of kidnapping, which is also unlawful under the international Convention of the Law of Sea.

From the time we lost contact around 13:15 local time on Sunday, we know that the IOF blocked all communication signals, including satellite phones. We are very concerned about this violation of journalists’ right to report freely and we remain gravely concerned about their ability to keep their professional equipment and their storage media. As Australian journalist Chris Graham recently observed “Bad things happen when good people stay silent, as history well records. But horrendous things happen when media are prevented from scrutinizing the actions of a state.”

Two of our participants who are Israeli citizens have been charged with attempting to enter Gaza and conspiracy to commit a crime, and were released on bail this morning. One of them, boat leader Zohar Chamberlain Regev, reports seeing blood on the deck of the Al Awda as the last participants were being dragged off the ship.

In comparison with the violence routinely directed at Palestinian civilians, including at fishers from Gaza, and the violent capture of Palestinian fishing boats, yesterday’s seizure and kidnapping may not be the most serious of Israeli crimes. What these violent acts have in common is that there is no accountability demanded by other governments and Israel continues to enjoy total impunity.

We call on national governments, civil society and international organizations to demand

that Israeli authorities immediately release our boat so that we can deliver our much-needed medical supplies on *Al Awda* and the fishing boat itself to the rightful recipients in Gaza. Detailed specification of our exact cargo on board are available on request.

Israel's capture of the lead boat in this Gaza-bound flotilla may seem like a predictable outcome to some, but that doesn't make it any less violent nor any less illegal. Our second boat *Freedom* will follow *Al Awda* within a day or two, and the Freedom Flotilla will continue until the blockade ends and Palestinians of Gaza regain their full freedom of movement.

Details about detainees still in prison, including their last videos and personal statements, can be found on our website and Facebook pages: www.facebook.com/FreedomFlotillaCoalition/

For more information, contact media spokespeople: <https://jfp.freedomflotilla.org/media-room-2>

Feature Image: Low resolution photo transmitted from the boat during final hours of navigation

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