

Gaza Flotilla Activists Unarmed: Canadian

By [Global Research](#)

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A Victoria-based activist who was aboard a flotilla of boats that was stormed by Israeli troops earlier this week claims Israeli commandos instigated the violence, saying they began opening fire on people on the deck.

“The first gunfire that we knew about is when the Israeli helicopter opened fire on people on the deck,” Kevin Neish, a self-described human shield, told CBC News from Istanbul.

The 53-year-old disputed Israeli claims the activists were armed. He said that once the attack began, people were looking for objects with which to defend themselves.

“It was a bloodbath and there were bodies strewn about, and medical attention given to them and a number of people with holes in their heads and it was pretty dramatic, but I did not see a weapon, a gun, anywhere on the Turkish Arab humanitarian aid side,” Neish said.

“They were using chains, lengths of pipes, sticks, against the machine-guns,” he said.

Neish was one of three Canadians and hundreds of activists taken into custody during a raid on a flotilla challenging a blockade to the Gaza Strip. Israeli commandos stormed the boats in international water — nine activists were killed and hundreds arrested.

Israeli officials have rejected the claims of activists that they initiated force, saying troops acted in self-defence. They said they did not expect resistance when they boarded the ships.

Israel has also released video showing soldiers descending onto the boat from a helicopter as crowds of men appear to attack them with pipes. Israeli officials also said that their troops only returned gunfire after they were shot at by some of the activists who had wrestled away the guns of at least two soldiers.

Neish said that he saw two captured Israelis being carried from the upper deck down. He said one man tried to strike out and attack one of the young soldiers but other activists pushed him back and protected the soldier.

“I didn’t see any serious wounds on the soldiers and they were flailing about, terrified, but I didn’t see any wounds on them,” he said.

Neish said around six to eight people began disarming the soldiers, pulling weapons off their ammo belts, ammo packs and helmets. But Neish said he didn’t see any machine-guns on the soldiers.

Neish said he was on the lower deck at the rear when the initial attack started.

He said after he was taken into custody, Israeli authorities treated him poorly and he is still suffering the effects of his arrest.

“I spent 15 hours without being allowed to go to the washroom. I spent 24 hours without really being allowed to stand,” he said. “I had guns put in my face. I had a revolver put in my face. Anytime I tried to rise up, stretch, I had a gun on me, had a dog snapping at me.”

Neish said the Turkish government has offered to fly him home.

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