

UK House Of Commons To Debate Abduction Of Human Rights Workers Bound For Gaza

By [Global Research](#)

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Nobel peace prize winner, Mairead Maguire, at a press conference following her abduction, by the Israeli Navy, from a boat delivering aid to Gaza. (LONDON) – The House of Commons will tonight be debating the interception of a boat in international waters by the Israeli Navy and the abduction of six British civilians on board. The debate[1] will be led by Emily Thornberry, MP, and constituent MP for Alex Harrison, a human rights worker who was one of those abducted.

On June 30th 2009 a small ferry, carrying 21 unarmed civilians and a small amount of humanitarian aid, was forcibly boarded by armed Israeli commandos as it sailed towards the partially destroyed seaport of Gaza city, in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The boat, the Spirit of Humanity, was in international waters at the time it was taken. Through the night prior to the boarding, the boat had been sailing only by compass after its navigational systems had been jammed by Israeli war ships which had surrounded and trailed the boat. The Navy had also threatened to fire on those on board. Following the boarding, in which the Al Jazeera journalists on board had their cameras taken, and in which at least one passenger was assaulted, the boat, its cargo and the 21 were forcibly taken to Israel, where they were then charged with illegally entering the country. The British film maker on board, Ishmahil Blagrove, managed to retain footage of the night's events.[2]

The voyage was the latest attempt by the international Free Gaza movement[3] to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, which results in the imprisonment of the 1.5 million population and conditions of desperate poverty and siege conditions for the civilian population.

“People in Gaza are being made to live in subhuman conditions. Children are dying, and governments are silent. It is important to continue sending boats to Gaza to challenge the criminal blockade enforced by the Israeli military,” said Huwaida Arraf, Free Gaza organiser and who was on board the Spirit.

Amongst the human rights workers on board was Nobel peace prize winner, Mairead Maguire, Cynthia McKinney, former U.S. Congresswoman from Georgia and award winning British film maker Ishmahil Blagrove. Six of those on board, including the Captain, were British, and after almost a week in Israeli custody the six were deported to Britain.

British supporters of Free Gaza contrast the silence of the British Foreign Office over the abduction and false imprisonment of six of its citizens with their very public reaction to the arrest of British Embassy staff in Iran. The Free Gaza movement is most concerned,

however, with what the abduction in international waters reveals about Israeli determination to enforce its illegal blockade, to prevent any attempt by human rights workers to travel to Gaza, and by the silence of international governments, including the British Government, to Israeli actions.

Free Gaza movement www.freegaza.org

[1] Debate, 'The interception of the boat The Spirit of Humanity', is due to take place at approximately 10 p.m. Monday 13th July 2009.

[2] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSFy-pkKtZU>

[3] The Free Gaza Movement, a human rights group, sent two boats to Gaza in August 2008. These were the first international boats to land in the port in 41 years. Since August, four more voyages were successful, taking Parliamentarians, human rights workers, and other dignitaries to witness the effects of Israel's draconian policies on the civilians of Gaza. On December 30, their boat, the DIGNITY was rammed in international waters, on its way to deliver emergency medical supplies to the people of Gaza, while they were under the infamous attack by Israel. Contact them at www.freegaza.org. For photos, please check www.flickr.com/photos/29205195@N02/

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