

# USS Liberty Survivor Joe Meadors Witnesses Israeli Violence Against Gaza Freedom Flotilla

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*On June 8, 1967, U.S. Navy Signalman **Joe Meadors** was standing watch on the USS Liberty off the coast of Gaza. In an aerial and sea attack on the USS Liberty that lasted 90 minutes, the Israeli military killed 34 U.S. sailors and wounded 174. Signalman Meadors watched the Israeli military almost sink the ship including Israeli forces machine gunning lifeboats.*

Fifty-one years later, on July 29, 2018, U.S. military veteran Joe Meadors witnessed another brutal Israeli military action, the violent takeover of an unarmed civilian ship named Al Awda in international waters, 40 miles off Gaza. Al Awda is part of the four-boat 2018 Gaza Freedom Flotilla that began its voyage in mid-May from Scandinavia, and 75 days later arrived off the coast of Gaza. Al Awda arrived on July 29 followed by Freedom on August 3. The two other boats of the flotilla, the Filestine and Mairead Maguire, were unable to complete the voyage due to damages incurred during a storm off Sicily, and maintenance problems.

Meadors said that on July 29, the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) appeared when the boat was 49 nautical miles off Gaza. He commented that there were six large patrol craft and four zodiac boats with storm troopers onboard. Meadors said one group of crew and passengers protected the pilot house. The IOF commandoes beat the Captain of the boat, hitting him and knocking his head against the sides of the ship and threatening him with execution if he did not restart the engine of the ship.



*Photo of Delegates and Crew on Al Awda (Source: Gaza Freedom Flotilla Coalition)*

Four crew members and delegates were tasered by IOF forces. One crew member was repeatedly tasered on the head and neck and a delegate was also tasered repeatedly. Both were in dangerous medical conditions after repeated taserings and only semi-conscious during the seven-hour trip to Ashdod.

Image on the right: Dr. Swee Ang (Source: Gaza Freedom Flotilla Coalition)



Renown orthopedic surgeon from the United Kingdom, **Dr. Swee Ang**, who is about 4 feet, 8 inches and weighs about 80 pounds was hit on the head and body and ended up with two

broken ribs. [Dr. Swee wrote](#) that:

“After a while the boat engine started. I was told later by Gerd who was able to hear Captain Herman tell the story to the Norwegian Consul in prison that the Israelis wanted Herman to start the engine, and threatened to kill him if he would not do so. But what they did not understand was that with this boat, once the engine stopped it can only be restarted manually in the engine room in the cabin level below. Arne the engineer refused to restart the engine, so the Israelis brought Herman down and hit him in front of Arne making it clear that they will continue to hit Herman if Arne would not start the engine. Arne is 70 years old, and when he saw Herman’s face went ash colour, he gave in and started the engine manually. Gerd broke into tears when she was narrating this part of the story. The Israelis then took charge of the boat and drove it to Ashdod.

Image below: Larry Commodore on his arrival at the Toronto airport after his medical ordeals while in Israeli prison.

(Image by Photo by Audrey Huntley)



Indigenous leader from Canada **Larry Commodore** was thrown to the deck when he requested to have his passport back before the delegates left the ship and injuring his foot. As [he told in The Real News Network interview](#)... when he arrived in Toronto, after processing at the Ashdod dock, he was taken to a hospital where his foot was sewn up. He said he passed out several times during the process.

A few hours after his return to Givon prison, he developed bladder problems resulting from his injuries and had to be re-hospitalized as he could not pass urine. Prison guards did not believe he was injured and forced him to drink more water which resulted in a very uncomfortable bladder. He had to wait 10 hours for a doctor to come to the prison and order that he be taken to the hospital where a catheter was inserted. When he was deported and returned to Canada, he was taken to a Toronto hospital where he received further treatment.

Several delegates were not given their prescribed daily medicines creating dangerous personal health situations for each of them...

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu describes the Israeli military as the most “morale” military in the world. Crew and delegates on Al Awda found that the Israeli commandos and military administrative staff and prison staff were brutal and a bunch of thieves.

Already we have written reports from six delegates that cash, credit cards, clothing and personal items were taken from them and never returned. We estimate that at least \$4,000 in cash and numerous credit cards were stolen from delegates. Delegates are cancelling their credit cards upon their return home and will be monitoring whether there are charges from July 29 onward as happened in 2010 when IOF soldiers used credit cards of passengers from the six ships of the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla.



*Crew & Delegates on Freedom Flotilla (Source: Freedom Flotilla Coalition)*

On Friday, August 3, Israeli commandos stopped Freedom, the second ship in the 2018 Gaza Freedom Flotilla, 40 miles off Gaza. Twelve delegates and crew from five countries have been taken to Givon prison where lawyer and consular visits will take place on Sunday, August 5, postponed from Saturday due to religious observations.



Medical Supplies being loaded onto Al Awda and boxes painted by Naples, Italy artists (Source: Ann Wright)

The Gaza Freedom Flotilla Coalition continues its demand that the State of Israel send to Gaza the 13,000 euros of much needed medical supplies, primarily gauze and sutures, in 116 boxes onboard Al Awda and Freedom.

Why have 12 national campaigns organized the 2018 Gaza Freedom Flotilla? To bring attention to the Israeli blockade and attacks on Gaza.

As Dr. Swee [wrote](#)...

“In the week we were sailing to Gaza, they had shot dead seven Palestinians and wounded more than 90 with live bullets in Gaza. They had further shut down fuel and food to Gaza. Two million Palestinians in Gaza live without clean water, with only 2-4 hours of electricity, in homes destroyed by Israeli bombs, in a prison blockaded by land, air and sea for 12 years.”The hospitals of Gaza since the 30 March had treated more than 9,071 wounded persons, 4,348 shot by machine guns from a hundred Israeli snipers while they were mounting peaceful demonstrations inside the borders of Gaza on their own land. Most of the gun-shot wounds were to the lower limbs and with depleted treatment facilities the limbs will suffer amputation. In this period, more than 165 Palestinians had been shot dead by the same snipers, including medics and journalists, children and women.

“The chronic military blockade of Gaza has depleted the hospitals of all surgical and medical supplies. This massive attack on an unarmed Freedom Flotilla bringing friends and some medical relief is an attempt to crush all hope for Gaza.”



Joe Meadors, the U.S. delegate on the 2018 Gaza Freedom Flotilla, puts it plainly and simply:

“Rest assured, Freedom Flotillas will continue to sail. Humanity demands they do.”

Image on the right: *Joe Meadors in Palermo, Sicily (Source: Ann Wright)*

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**Ann Wright** is a 29-year US Army/Army Reserves veteran, a retired United States Army colonel and retired U.S. State Department official, known for her outspoken opposition to the Iraq War.

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