

ISRAEL'S CRIMES AGAINST THE GLOBAL SUMUD FLOTILLA HUMANITARIAN ACTIVISTS



The Global Sumud flotilla, carrying humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people in Gaza, was illegally intercepted by the Israeli navy in international waters over the course of 38 hours, from the evening of October 1st through the morning of the 3rd.

462 peaceful activists from around 45 countries were on board the intercepted vessels, some of whom wore the insignia of international organizations. They were kidnapped and brought to Israel against their will, along with their ships, which were unlawfully seized and brought to Israel.

From the moment of interception, all activists were held incommunicado, with communication systems having been jammed, some of them subjected to degrading treatment, and water cannons. In short, the activists' humanitarian mission was violently crushed.

The Israeli response has resulted and continues to result in a series of illegal and violent acts that constitute serious violations of international maritime, humanitarian, and human rights law. The List of Crimes Committed by Israel:

1. Illegal Interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla. Violation of customary norms of international law as accepted under Articles 19, 88 and 301 of UNCLOS, which requires that states respect the peaceful and safe passage of vessels. Israel does not have the right to intercept civilian vessels according to UNCLOS Article 110 with none of the exceptions under Article 110 (a) – (e) having been engaged.
2. Abduction and arbitrary arrest of participants. Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Prohibition of arbitrary arrests. The activists were not combatants or a military threat. The activists are legitimate citizens participating in a humanitarian mission, neither are they irregular migrants attempting to enter Israel territory contrary to Israeli immigrations laws.
3. Forced transfer to prisons in Israel. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention: Prohibition of the transfer of civilians from occupied territory. This rule extends to the protection of persons arrested at sea in the context of an armed conflict.
4. Physical violence and inhuman treatment by the use of water cannons against peaceful civilians on high sea contrary to Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions: Prohibition of violence against civilians. Article 5: Prohibition of torture and cruel treatment.
5. Defaming peaceful citizens is a form of illegal stigmatization. Insults, Defamation, and the Slandorous Labeling of "Terrorists": Right to Dignity (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 1).
6. Unlawful processing of activists as "illegal immigrants" before the Immigration Authority, court hearings without the presence of lawyers, and coercion into signing a document stating that the participants entered Israel illegally: Violation of the right to a fair trial, liberty, and Security under Article 9 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
7. Repeated drone attacks by Israel against the Flotilla. Act of aggression against the flag and citizen states, including the illegal use of force, and as a war crime under Article 8 of the Rome statute and violation of 2(4) of the UN Charter as well as infringement of the human rights of the people onboard.
8. Attack of the Vessels and seizure thereof. On the High Seas, the law applying on each ship is the domestic law of its flag state. An attack by an Israeli military warship on a vessel on the High Seas is an attack and infringement of the sovereignty of the flag state. These acts of illegal possession of vessels or abduction of crew on the High Seas can be pursued by each flag state and constitutes a crime within their domestic jurisdiction.

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9. Forcibly intercepting and seizing a civilian vessel carrying humanitarian aid for the population of Gaza. Clear reflection of Israel's unlawful starvation policy, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law and listed as a war crime under Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the Rome Statute. The Israeli blockade over Gaza is unlawful in light of Paragraph 102 of the San Remo Manual, which stipulates the illegality of a blockade if it 'has the sole purpose of starving the civilian population or denying it other objects essential for its survival'. Israel's unlawful blockade has been condemned numerous times by the UN bodies and experts, most recently by the UN Commission of Inquiry in August 2025 which concluded that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, including by depriving the Palestinian group of objects indispensable for their survival.

Legal assessment:

The Global Sumud Flotilla was intercepted on the High Seas and not in Israel's territorial waters and jurisdiction. The Global Sumud Flotilla never intended to go into Israeli territorial waters. Israel has no legal jurisdiction over the 12 mile territorial waters around the shores of the Gaza strip. The 458 participants are being arbitrarily detained with no legal grounds. The participants did not intend to go to Israel and were instead brought to Israel by unlawful force. The Israeli maritime blockade has been in place for 17 years and is an intrinsic part of the long-term occupation found illegal in the ICJ advisory opinion. It is therefore not a short-term measure in time of armed conflict as specified in the San Remo manual. In any event the San Remo rules explicitly state that humanitarian supplies may not be blockaded. The UN Commission of Inquiry has already determined that Israel is committing genocide. The blockade is plainly a part of the machinery of such genocide. Guaranteeing the safe passage of the Global Sumud Flotilla is a clear matter under international and humanitarian law. Article 23 of the Geneva Convention outlines the duty of Contracting States to 'allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of all relief consignments, equipment and personnel provided in accordance with this Section, even if such assistance is destined for the civilian population of the adverse Party.'

In addition, customary international law applicable to naval blockades indicates, firstly, that "If the civilian population of the blockaded territory is inadequately provided with food and other objects essential for its survival, the blockading party must provide for free passage of such food and other essential supplies" (San Remo Manual on IL Applicable to Armed Conflict at Sea, art. 103). This duty applies even when blockades are not prohibited. More importantly, in the case of the Israeli blockade, customary law establishes that "The declaration or establishment of a blockade is prohibited if [...] the damage to the civilian population is, or may be expected to be, excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated from the blockade". The conditions for the application of such prohibition have been not only fully met but exceptionally trespassed by the Israeli-induced, controlled and aggravated unlivability of Gaza, where any chances of survival of the Palestinian population, as a protected national group in its land, are being destroyed.