Brigands Bound for Gaza

Turkey severs ties with Israel in a bid to break the Gaza Blockade

By David Parsons & Aaron Hecht

Instantly, anti-Israel rage spread like wildfire throughout the Middle East and farther afield. Within hours, demonstrators staged angry protests in dozens of major cities across the globe, and world leaders – in a rush to judgment – began condemning Israel for attacking innocent civilians on a humanitarian aid convoy.

But in their haste, it seems world leaders were duped once again by media serving a propaganda cause rather than the truth.

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The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ’s United States Branch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with offices in Washington, D.C. and in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We are a non-denominational faith ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends.

We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by using the enclosed response card to make your donation to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.

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Willfully Disregarding the Facts

The world’s shameful response to the ‘Free Gaza’ Flotilla

By Malcolm Hedding

The international condemnation of Israel over the recent interception of the Turkish ship the Mavi Marmara is clearly a case of “don’t confuse me with facts because my mind is already made up.”

Any fair-minded person, after viewing the IDF’s video footage of the incident, will concede that Israeli commandoes were definitely not boarding a ship full of peaceful activists intent on bringing love and aid to the citizens of Gaza. On the contrary, there were embedded among the passengers a large number of well-armed militants motivated by a twisted desire to inflict bodily harm on any Israeli soldiers they encountered on the voyage to Gaza or to die while trying.

It has emerged that many of these so-called activists were in fact radical Islamic jihadists fully prepared to sacrifice their lives for this misguided adventure. They, in fact, left statements to this effect with their families and friends and then, as they saw it, went off to wage war against Israel in the real expectation of dying and ascending immediately to paradise!

Israel’s interception of the ship in question, and indeed of the whole flotilla, was imminently legal given that several such ships have been used over recent years to attempt to ferry arms to Hamas and Hizbullah. The Hamas regime ruling Gaza has been officially listed as a terrorist organization by numerous states and the on-going arms blockade of Gaza is, in fact, a cooperative effort supported by Egypt and the United States.

Once again the radical Left, mainly in Europe, and Muslim extremists have linked hands in order to recklessly stage a publicity stunt that had little to do with delivering aid to Gaza. Not only did this misguided venture cost lives, but it has exposed the anti-Semitic agenda of those who gave themselves to it. The rush of states like Turkey and the wider world, including the United Nations, to judge and condemn Israel before the real facts emerged was little short of pathetic. Once again, blind arrogance and hatred triumphed over reason and truth.

Israel did what was right and, indeed, what every self-respecting democracy would do in defense of its civilians and sovereignty. The failure then of the Western democracies to stand up in defense of a more measured approach based on all the facts is evidence of the degree to which they have given in to the radical voices of hatred in their countries. Appeasement of these voices is a highway to disaster and it is slowly but surely eroding the freedoms that were won, especially in Europe, some sixty years ago by the spilling of much blood. The winds of change are indeed blowing, but if the West is not careful it will reap the whirlwind!

The Prime Minister of Israel was thus right when he accused the international community of double standards and of losing its way in terms of understanding the difference between good and evil. This hypocrisy is no more evident than in the recent attack by North Korea against a South Korean frigate which resulted in the death of forty-five South Korean sailors. Where was the condemnation, protests and outrage at this clear act of unprovoked aggression? No, all of this has been reserved for Israel, who is locked in a life-and-death struggle with an opponent in Gaza who – with the full backing of Tehran and Damascus – unashamedly calls for and works towards her total destruction. An opponent that, without shame, has launched some 10,000 rockets at the Israeli civilian population over the past decade.

It has become popular to bash Israel and ‘play games’ with totalitarian regimes in the Middle East, including the rulers of Gaza, but in the end the truth of what really happened on the Mavi Marmara will and is being revealed for all to see. That is, to those who are not blinded by hate and whose minds are not already made up!

And by the way, in case you were wondering, an average of nearly 150 trucks pass from Israel into Gaza every day, bringing much needed help to the people living there.

Rev. Malcolm Hedding serves as ICEJ Executive Director and travels extensively teaching about Israel and the days in which we live.
Several hours later, the IDF began releasing video footage of what really happened in the pre-dawn hours on board that ship. An elite unit of Israeli troops armed with paintball guns were seen lowering themselves down by rope onto the deck of the *Mavi Marmara* before being furiously set upon by dozens of men armed with clubs and pipes and iron chains. Some of these ‘peace activists’ also had knives, stun grenades and fire bombs at the ready.

It turned out that embedded among the passengers were a group of about 40 Muslim militants recruited by the Turkish organization IHH, which has links to Hamas, al-Qaida and other terror militias. They had been brought on board separately from the other passengers back in Istanbul, and had already pirated the vessel from its crew in order to prepare a brute welcome for any Israeli soldiers who tried to board.

According to diary notes and media interviews found later, their motivation was not concern for the downtrodden in Gaza, but a twisted dream of dying in hand-to-hand combat with Israeli soldiers. For more than 10 minutes, the handful of Israeli troops fought for their lives against the swarming militants. Only after the attackers stole two hand guns and began firing were the Israeli forces allowed to resort to live fire to defend themselves.

Footage taken while the flotilla was still en route to Gaza shows a number of militants wishing for martyrdom and chanting “Remember Khaibar,” a well-worn Muslim battle cry which recalls Muhammad’s massacre of a Jewish village in ancient Arabia.

The whole violent episode was senseless and unnecessary. Israel had repeatedly offered to send the aid shipments through land crossings into Gaza and urged the ships to go with them to the port of Ashdod. But the Muslim militants who had commandeered the flotilla refused, at one point telling the Israelis to “go back to Auschwitz.”

It was a tragic decision which left nine Turkish combatants dead, while seven Israeli soldiers were among the scores of wounded.

While trying to fend off the international condemnation, Israeli leaders were also facing some tough questions at home regarding the obvious intelligence, operational and informational mistakes made in intercepting the flotilla. For example, why did the IDF not know about the armed militants on board? Answer: It appears Israel has done very little spying in recent decades on its close ally Turkey, though that now has to change.

And why did it take so long to release the IDF video footage? Answer: Besides the need to process the film and to first notify the families of wounded soldiers, it seems army helicopters on the scene were used to ferry all the injured to hospital before a chopper could be freed to deliver the exculpatory evidence to Defense Ministry headquarters.

With millions of hits on YouTube, the IDF videos eventually began turning the tide in the battle for world opinion, but two nagging questions remained. First, would Israel cave in to demands for an international investigation of the incident? And second, would Israel also fold under the mounting pressure to lift the Gaza blockade?

Hoping to stave off another libelous Goldstone report, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won unanimous cabinet approval for the appointment of a three-person panel to conduct an internal Israeli inquiry into the Gaza aid flotilla, under the scrutiny of two foreign observers: David Trimble, the Nobel-winning leader of Northern Ireland’s Protestant community, and Canadian military law expert Ken Watkin.

Netanyahu stressed that the main goal of the probe is to prove to the world that the Israeli naval operation to stop the hostile fleet was appropriate and met international standards. Besides reviewing the legal and operational aspects of the incident and the Gaza arms blockade in general, the Turkel committee will also examine actions taken by the flotilla’s Turkish sponsors, especially the terrorist-linked group IHH.

The US welcomed the move, insisting Israel was capable of conducting a fair and impartial probe into the flotilla raid. But Turkey has continued to lead a determined campaign for an international inquiry, and has even threatened to join Hamas in filing a petition against Israel in the International Criminal Court.

Abbas also rejected the internal Israeli probe and insisted “Israel must lift the blockade.” Yet this call came amid reports that the Palestinian leader told US President Barack Obama during his recent visit to Washington that that he is opposed to lifting the naval blockade of Gaza because it would bolster Hamas. Egypt is also opposed to a sudden lifting of the blockade, which it helps maintain as well.
But the European Union urged Israel to open all Gaza crossings immediately, insisting the current embargo is “unacceptable [and] cannot continue.” The EU is mulling ways it could contribute to opening up better access to Gaza through properly supervised crossings, while acknowledging Israel’s “legitimate security concerns” to stop arms smuggling to Hamas.

Israeli officials have countered that the blockade is working and now is not the time to lift it, as Hamas is facing serious financial difficulties and is losing popularity among the 1.4 million residents of Gaza. But European leaders were also under growing public pressure at home to act, especially due to the recent mass street protests against Israel in European cities and the presence of many EU citizens on board the flotilla.

Meantime, Israel is gearing up for the possibility of encountering a pair of Iranian cargo ships that are attempting to break the blockade with more supplies of humanitarian aid. Officials in Tehran denied earlier threats that the vessels will have an Iranian naval escort, but they also made clear those on board “are willing to become martyred.”

All this takes place against the backdrop of deteriorating relations with Turkey that, according to Dr. Michael Oren, Israel’s Ambassador to the US, represents a shift of “historic proportions” in the wider Middle East. Though Ankara’s steady realignment away from Europe began long before the seizing of the Mavi Marmara, there is no question that the events of May 31st have accelerated Turkey’s eastward movement ever closer to Iran.

David Parsons & Aaron Hecht serve with the ICEJ News team in Jerusalem

‘Free Gaza’ Flotilla
Setting the Record Straight

- The flotilla’s primary aim was not humanitarian aid but to cause a provocation.
- The flotilla’s organizers have known links to terrorist groups.
- Israeli soldiers only used force when their lives were in danger.
- Israel has a legitimate right to self-defense and to make sure no arms get into Gaza.
- Israel facilitates a vast operation to provide humanitarian goods and medical services to Gaza.

For in-depth talking points go to: www.icejusa.org/gazaflotilla

COLD-TURKEY (ABOVE): Turkey’s Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, condemning the Israeli seizure of the Mavi Marmara and the deaths of 9 Turkish activists on board. (AP Photo)

FREE GAZA FLAGSHIP (COVER): The Mavi Marmara leaving dock in Istanbul on its voyage to break the combined Israeli and Egyptian blockade of Hamas in Gaza. (AP Photo)
In Belarus, the ICEJ has been assisting up to 500 Jews a year to leave this terribly repressive country led by the last dictator in Europe. And in the Baltic states, the bad economic conditions are causing many Jews to leave.

In Sweden, the ICEJ has been sponsoring flights for Jewish families driven out by a wave of Muslim and Leftist anti-Semitism which sympathizes with the Palestinians and harasses the local Jews. Many were once Danish Jews who had come to Sweden during World War Two in the famous overnight rescue effort from the Nazis.

ICEJ is working in Uzbekistan where the situation is getting tougher for Jews, as new laws have restricted Jewish education.

In Russia, the government has clamped down on two Israeli consulates giving immigration visas for Jews, forcing many applicants to travel long journeys to Moscow across the vast nation’s 11 time zones. But still, year on year over the past two years, aliyah from the former Soviet Union is up by 20%.

Most newly arrived Jews are very happy to be in Israel. They feel safe and secure among their own people. They find greater opportunities for their families to work, learn, and live a Jewish lifestyle. But outside Israel the world is becoming a more dangerous place for Jews.

One recent global study found there were 1,129 violent anti-Semitic incidents in 2009 compared with 559 in 2008.

Today, Christians have an opportunity to assist Israel in bringing more Jews home. In the midst of economic hardships and resurgent anti-Semitism, thousands of Jewish families will be returning to Israel.

Since the beginning of 2009, aliyah to Israel has increased dramatically worldwide. The global economic downturn and a recent surge of anti-Semitism have been driving this unexpected rise in Jews returning to their ancient homeland. At the same time, Israel’s own stable economy and brighter job market have been a beacon drawing other Jewish people home.

Last year’s war in Gaza sparked angry anti-Israel protests around the world, leading to violent incidents against Jewish communities abroad, including in Europe and the Americas. In France, the number of anti-Semitic attacks doubled in 2009. French Jews who fled North Africa in the 1950s found a haven there until a more recent flood of Muslim immigrants followed, bringing troubles for Jews. Yet once again, the aliyah from France has increased.

The lingering recession has also spurred Jewish aliyah in North and South America, especially from Argentina.

With the economic difficulties came budget reductions in the organizations which help with aliyah. The Jewish Agency for Israel has appealed to the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem for help with new programs designed to help immigrants just after they arrive in Israel.

In July, there will be a large flight originating from Brazil which will bring Jews from all over Latin America. Please join with us to support this project.

In times of trouble, Jews come to Israel for refuge. We are now in one of those times when serious help is needed.

Last December, the ICEJ assisted 85 South African Jews with a fast-track absorption process, as they fled a terrible crime wave and political uncertainty.

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Support Israel. Give to Aliyah
www.icejusa.org/aliyah
A Lasting Legacy
Simple Steps to Maximize Your Support for Israel

Howard Brandt, a long-time volunteer at the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem, died at age 84. A behind-the-scenes man who faithfully duplicated Feast seminar tapes in the back room for many years, Howard considered the ICEJ as ‘family’, and bequeathed just over half of his estate to the ongoing work of the Embassy.

“I have no family whatsoever,” Howard once said, “and the ICEJ and Feast volunteers are the people I care about. You do good work for Israel.”

Many of us wish we could give more to the strategic ministry of the ICEJ, but there are things we can do beyond simply writing a check that allow us to give more both now and in the future. With proper planning it is possible to save on taxes, provide for loved ones and also bless Israel in far greater measure than most of us ever imagined! Some of these ways are listed below:

**Stock:** You may own stocks that are worth considerably more than when purchased. Rather than paying the high taxes due on the increased value, donate that stock to the ICEJ. Then the full value is tax deductible to you and goes to benefit theLord’s work!

**Gift Annuity:** Through a Gift Annuity you can make a gift to the ICEJ today, and enjoy the tax deductions, while receiving a fixed income for the rest of your life.

**Life Insurance:** If you have a life insurance policy that is no longer needed, you can name the ICEJ as the beneficiary.

Or you can take out a life insurance policy on yourself just for the purpose of benefiting the Embassy’s work in Israel.

**IRA:** You can name the ICEJ as the beneficiary on your IRA.

**Will:** You can use your will or trust to make a gift to the ICEJ and to save enough on taxes that your family will still receive the level of financial provision that you intended.

As we prepare for and plan the future of this ministry, we ask you to plan with us. Through these simple planned giving instruments you may be able to make a greater and more far reaching impact than you ever thought possible.

Of course, everyone’s situation is different, so be sure to consult a financial adviser about the approach to planned giving that is most appropriate for you. And remember, the decision to give to the ministry of the ICEJ through your estate is one of the best ways to ensure a lasting legacy of blessing for Israel and the Jewish people for many years to come.

To become a member of the ICEJ’s Shomer Society (“Keeper of Israel”) and include our ministry in your planned giving please notify us at:
PO Box 332974, Murfreesboro, TN 37133.

For more information call 1-800-379-3897

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