

Statement from LEPOCO Steering Committee June 1, 2010, Emergency Meeting about the Attack by the Government of Israel on the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza

We were deeply saddened to learn of the attack by the Israeli Government on the humanitarian aid boats taking desperately needed supplies to Gaza.

We speak out now because our government leaders have failed to condemn the attack on the Freedom Flotilla.

We speak out because U.S. military aid to Israel of over \$3 billion a year makes us all, as U.S. citizens, complicit and responsible in this commando raid.

We speak out to support the nonviolent, creative dedication of over 600 people from 40 countries, in their attempt to carry aid and hope to the beleaguered Gazans. They acted with courage to heal abandonment when governments have failed.

We speak out because we are offended at the vile accusations against flotilla members who acted from human empathy for the 1.5 million poor people of Gaza who are restricted to an area less than half the size of Northampton County, deprived even of safe drinking water, and unable to rebuild from the bombing destruction of over a year ago.

We speak out because we are deeply troubled that the violent seizure of civilian boats has been portrayed as self-defense when those who were forced to act in self-defense, from their commitment to nonviolence, were not allowed to speak and their cameras and cell phones were stolen.

We speak out because the three-year blockade of Gaza is an affront to the world community and as collective punishment is a violation of the Geneva Convention. The blockade must be ended.

The two ships still heading to Gaza should be allowed to proceed posthaste with their humanitarian aid cargo intact.

We call for an independent, international investigation of the attack on the Freedom Flotilla; the release of all members of the flotilla, their possessions and boats; and, the delivery of all their aid cargo to Gaza. Why have the names of the dead, injured and imprisoned been withheld so long? Compensation should be paid by the Israeli Government for all deaths, injuries, and material losses suffered by members of the flotilla as a result of the attack.

Our government, and we -- as a people -- must throw off our complacency, acknowledge the outrage against human rights that Israel's blockade of Gaza represents, and through wise diplomacy confront its perpetrators (not only Israel, but Egypt, which has played a role in Gaza's isolation). The threats engendered by the present U.S. policy of failing to question any Israeli actions have been spelled out by many including General David Patraeus, the Jewish group J Street, and former U.S. Ambassador Edward Peck, a member of the Freedom Flotilla. U.S. policy does not promote security for the Palestinian people, Israel, the region or our own country.

A first step would be suspension of U.S. military aid to the region, until there are serious efforts toward a peace agreement.

We support those Palestinians, Israelis and internationals who have acted, at great personal risk, to bring the possibility of peace to Israel and Palestine through nonviolent struggle -- the Israeli Refusnik soldiers, Rachel Corrie and all those members of the International Solidarity Movement killed and injured, Christian Peacemakers, and all the ships that have attempted to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza. Richard Falk, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Palestine and the Occupied Territories, has said that the best hope for the Palestinians is a nonviolent campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel since only the people of the world can stand against the crime that has no borders.

This statement will be sent to the U.S. Administration, Israeli officials, members of the U.S. Congress, local press/media outlets, and local and national organizations.