

# *Euro-Med urges independent investigation into Israeli attack on Gaza-bound aid flotilla*

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Geneva, May 4 (RHC)-- An international human rights organization has called for an independent probe into an Israeli drone attack on a Freedom Flotilla vessel carrying humanitarian aid to the besieged Gaza Strip.

An Israeli drone strike hit a Freedom Flotilla vessel carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza. The attack took place in international waters near Malta.

In a statement released, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor called for an independent and transparent investigation under Maltese jurisdiction, and with the UN participation.

The Swiss-based rights organization stressed that perpetrators of such violations must be held to account. "The deliberate targeting of a civilian aid ship in international waters is a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, the Law of the Sea, and the Rome Statute, which prohibits the targeting of humanitarian objects," the rights organization said.

The human rights monitor stressed that the failure to take action will only encourage further attacks on humanitarian missions and worsen the catastrophe unfolding in Gaza.

"This attack falls within a recurring and documented pattern of force being used to prevent ships from reaching the Gaza Strip, even before they approach its shores." The right organization is also demanded "guarantees for safe sea passage for humanitarian aid bound for Gaza."

Meanwhile, Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad resistance movements have condemned Israel's attack on the Freedom Flotilla as piracy and a blatant violation of international law.

A vessel belonging to the Gaza Freedom Flotilla came under attack by an Israeli drone strike in international waters near Malta, while it was attempting to bring humanitarian aid to the besieged Palestinian territory. The attack caused an explosion and fire.

The Maltese government said the fire was brought under control, adding that 16 people were on board. But the Freedom Flotilla Coalition said thirty people were aboard the vessel when the attack occurred, adding that the targeted ship sent a distress signal.

Euro-Med also called for Israeli ambassadors to be summoned to answer for violations of international law, including the ongoing Gaza blockade and the bombing of civilian vessels.

The drone strike took place as the Freedom Flotilla is campaigning to end the Tel Aviv regime's siege of Gaza, which is exacerbating the humanitarian situation and causing severe shortages of basic necessities, including food and medical supplies.

In March, the Israeli regime's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, banned aid deliveries into Gaza in a move he said was meant to pressure Hamas into accepting an extension of the first stage of the ceasefire deal, which Israel broke.

Israeli minister of military affairs Israel Katz recently said no preparations were being made to bring supplies into the strip. Katz further said the regime would not allow any humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, confirming that food is being used as a tool of pressure against Hamas.

It has been several weeks since Israel has blocked the entry of food, medicine and other critical supplies. Aid agencies say there are concerns of a full-blown famine taking hold across the blockaded Palestinian territory.

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