



## **New Gaza Flotilla Heads to Break Israel's Blockade**

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**Dimitri Lascaris (DL):** Good day. This is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Sparta, Greece on May 5th, 2026 for Reason2Resist. I'm very pleased to be joined today by one courageous mariner, a gentleman by the name of Ehab Lotayef, who is an activist, an engineer, a long time organizer for the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza. He hails from Montreal normally, but today he is on a vessel that forms part of the Global Sumud Flotilla. And he is, I understand, not far from the shores of our precious Gaza. How are you doing today, my friend?

**Ehab Lotayef (EL):** I'm trying, Dimitri, thank you very much. If you permit me, I just want to clarify one thing. The flotilla is a combined group of flotillas. So the Freedom Flotilla, which has been functional now for the last 16 years, is joining forces with the Global Sumud Flotilla, and we're heading to meet with them with four boats from here, one coming from Greece and some coming from Turkey.

**DL:** So if you can tell us, where are you approximately at this moment?

**EL:** We are between Sicily and the west side of Greece.

**DL:** So you're probably not far from where I am. I am in the south of Greece, near Kalamata, which is close to the western coast of Greece. I would love to be there with you today, brother, but I guess my job today is to report what you and your comrades are doing on this marvelous vessel. First of all, why don't you tell us about the lay of the land for the moment or the lay of the water, I guess I should say. Are any other vessels with you currently or is your vessel alone at this particular moment?

**EL:** No, right now we are four vessels from the Freedom Flotilla Coalition. We are in line of sight of each other. If I turn around, I'll see probably two of them on one side and one on the other side. We're sailing together as four.

**DL:** Is it possible for you to kind of swivel your camera and show us one or two of them?

**EL:** Well, the sun won't help because it is shining, but let me try, Dimitri, let me try. Let me try. Ah, not right now – well, there's one. I don't know if you see it. There are two actually over there. I don't know if you can see them, very far on the horizon.

**DL:** It's a little bit difficult to see, but we'll take your word for it.

**EL:** I know, I know.

**DL:** Now, how many passengers are on your vessel?

**EL:** We are 9.

**DL:** And can you tell us a little bit about these passengers, where do they come from, what do they do in life? Who are they?

**EL:** Sure. We have two from Montreal – actually it ended up being one, but there were two from Montreal. Olivier Huard, who is quite well known in the climate action in Montreal, and he's one of the people who climbed the bridge a couple of years ago for environmental causes. Our first skipper is from Vancouver, Grace. And our captain is originally Belgian, but he lives in Norway. We also have two Australians with us. And we have a French former senator and a member of the European Parliament. In total, we are nine on this boat.

**DL:** Do you recall the name of your comrade from France, the former senator?

**EL:** Yes, sure, [00:03:56][inaudible]. [0.0s] She's a longtime Palestinian activist who got into lots of trouble locally in France for her support of the Palestinian cause over decades.

**DL:** Is the name of your vessel Perseverance? Have I got that right?

**EL:** That is correct.

**DL:** Right. And this particular vessel was contributed to the flotilla by the Canada Boat to Gaza? Is that correct?

**EL:** Correct, major funding for this boat was from the Canada Boat to Gaza, and the minor partner in the boat itself is the Australian movement Free Gaza Australia.

**DL:** So I understand you've been a passenger on the Flotilla to Gaza on two prior occasions, is that accurate?

**EL:** Correct, that is accurate, yes.

**DL:** What happened on those two prior occasions?

**EL:** The first time in 2011, it was just after a year or so after the massacre committed on the Mavi Marmara. So I guess the Israelis were on better behavior at that time, nothing like now. They did taser us on the boat when we didn't comply right away. But the prison was really like a three-star prison. So it wasn't that bad. There was a lot of psychological harassment, actually. But that's the extent of it. The second time – and between that time in 2011 and 2015, I continued to be a coordinator and organizer within the Flotilla level itself, not only the Canadian Boat to Gaza. And in 2015, I sailed again from Greece. We were four boats at the time, but after the first boat was attacked, the decision was made for the other three boats to turn around/them and [00:06:01] [inaudible]. I was not captured by this in 2015.

**DL:** Right, and first of all, before I ask you about what lies ahead, up until this moment have you seen any suspicious vessels or aircraft near the Perseverance?

**EL:** We always do – actually, I started in Ajaccio in Corsica and then headed to Sicily where we met another group of the people with us here today. We always see drones, we don't know if those drones are just watching migrants, stuff like that, or if they are for us in particular, that we can't answer. But last night, we were targeted specifically because there was a helicopter that made the tour on top of our four boats, and we had on this side a military boat on the island. We couldn't tell if it's Israeli or not, they turn off their signaling, and you don't know what they are exactly. But last night we were on the verge of believing that we were going to be boarded during the night, and then everything calmed down by one o'clock in the morning and nothing appeared after that.

**DL:** And the send-off you received from Sicily, were the Italian authorities completely cooperative? Did they create any obstacles for you? Or did you have no issues with the Italian authorities?

**EL:** No issues with the Italian authorities at all this time.

**DL:** So, as you well know, and as many in our audience will know, the genocidal Israeli military apprehended vessels of the Global Sumud Flotilla several days ago near the waters of Greece and deposited a number of the passengers after kidnapping them on the high seas in an act of piracy. They deposited them on the island of Crete. And then an Israeli minister, I think it was the foreign minister, thanked the Greek government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis for coordinating this act of piracy with Israel. And there is therefore good reason to believe, and to my knowledge, the Greek Government has not denied clearly that it was coordinating with Israel, you are heading towards the same area where this act of piracy occurred. Are you and your comrades on this vessel concerned about what's going to happen and about the complicity of the Greek government? What do you think about the Greek government?

**EL:** Of course, we were all very disappointed not only on the Greeks, I mean, yes, the Greeks, but also the whole European Union, that this Israeli attack from both is happening now just over their shores and in the areas that we will be sailing. We're getting closer and closer to those shores. So we have no confidence in any government. We have no confidence.

We don't coordinate or liaise with any government, because we know very well that their judgment depends on so many factors. So you're totally right. We are concerned about that. Also, we are concerned that the Israelis can come and attack any time.

But on the other hand, we had our very well-planned, very well-trained passengers on all the boats. We know how to react with nonviolent resistance to not cause anybody any harm. So we know all that. We also know that Israel itself can do whatever it wants with us. I mean, I was just watching a video of Thiago, literally minutes before we connected, being led to the Israeli court room, and he looked abused, let's say, to put it at least. So we are concerned, but at the end of the day, since I started coming on this Flotilla, when people told me to be safe, I just told them: Unfortunately, I can try my best to be safe but please know that my safety is inversely proportional to the stupidity of the Israeli commander or authority person that we will face. So we do our part. We do it not for us, we do it for the people of Gaza who have been living in hell for years, we do it for the Palestinians as a whole. Nobody is standing up for their rights. And with all that said, our concern about ourselves is there, but everybody here knows what they're doing.

**DL:** Now you mentioned our comrades who were kidnapped and taken to the genocidal colony, one of them, of course, Brazilian activist, Thiago Avila, whom we've interviewed on this program and also a Spanish national by the name of Saif Abukeshek. They, as you mentioned, are in the illegitimate courts of Israel, are trying to assert their rights in the legitimate courts of Israel, they are under detention. It appears that they are going to be prosecuted under Israeli law for some offenses. Given the current state of play, the charges could be quite serious. You have already attempted to enter Gaza and were apprehended on a prior voyage. You are known to have had organizational responsibilities for a long time in the flotilla. I would think that you are going to be a primary target of Israel and you are at high risk of being taken back to the genocidal colony and being treated in the same way as Thiago and Saif. I imagine you must be concerned about that. I mean how will you deal with this if they end up doing that to you?

**EL:** Believe me, Dimitri, I know that everything is possible. Of course, nobody wants to be in that position. I was, from the beginning, very worried about the Thiago and Saif, because I knew quite well – you know, when we heard the news that they dropped on the coast of Crete, the people who were on the boats that day, attacked three, four nights ago now. I think it was on the 30th. I told people, are we sure that they dropped everybody? And everybody was saying, the news we have is that they dropped everybody. But I knew that the Israelis have a bigger plan, and unfortunately, they're working now with the same rule book that Trump worked with Venezuela. They kidnap people from any place, they take them if they want them, they charge them with whatever charges they want to and for them, life goes on.

So I'm not going to tell you, I'm not concerned, but I'm going to tell you that I calculated all those risks, I know what can happen and that anything can happen. And things can happen in a crazy way as well, regardless of targeting me or anybody else. They want to intimidate the Flotilla. And by the way, that is one of the main reasons that we decided to sail. We were in

Sicily, preparing to sail when we got the news, and the organizers, the steering committee decided let's wait and see what happens to those from the 20-some abducted boats. So when that was decided, I was for sailing, because there is no point in stopping at this point. We tell our kids "stand up to the bully" and that's the only way to deal with a bully.

Israel has to learn that we will not stop, really, we will not stop because anybody who starts thinking about what we saw in Gaza the last two and a half years and is just able to do it – and I don't like to judge anybody – but anybody who is able to do this I think do it. And if I would say that in the in the early 2010s when we started with Flotilla and after the Mavi Marmara and so, if I would say, that there were thousands or tens of thousands supporting the Flotilla, I can tell you now with all confidence that there are now millions supporting the Flotilla. This is the 35th+ Flotilla of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition. We keep going. The Global Sumud, in the last year, started with huge energy and they're obviously determined to keep going.

So again, this is a part of the story. The bigger part of the story is remembering the Palestinians. Remember the Palestinians in Gaza. Do what you can to support them, because they're fighting their own struggle, but the world is letting them down. And probably a sort of slogan you've heard before is that if governments fail, we sail. If governments did their duty, we would not have to sail. Israel is a rogue state. It violates international law on all levels. And nobody, nobody is doing anything from the Western government except maybe Spain, you know, paying a bit more lip service and a bit of smooth action with Israel, but Israel will not be stopped like that. We have to all go together, and the governments have to move.

**DL:** Lastly, Ehab, before I let you go, how can people support the Global Sumud Flotilla?

**EL:** Well, again, just let me clarify that we are not all Global Sumud Flotilla, it's a combined word between the Global Sumud Flotilla and the Freedom Flotilla.

**DL:** You're right, my apologies.

**EL:** No, no, just to make it clear, I mean, it might not mean a lot to Monsieur and Madame tout le monde, that they won't really find a difference. I just wanted to clarify that you can, I don't know the organizational level of the Global at an organizational level. But for us, the Canadian Boat to Gaza website has got a lot of ways to support – one of them financially, of course. These missions don't... We do them with your money, you know, with people's money that put confidence in us. So we need that to be as much as possible, running all the time. You can also send people to the Freedom Flotilla Coalition website, which is also full of information on how to aid from different countries. Last but not least, we are determined to continue and we continue together as the millions that I feel are really behind this movement. There are many ways to challenge the Israeli hegemony, but this is just one way. People can find many other ways to do that, and we all support each other.

**DL:** Thank you so much Ehab. We'll put links in the description to the video to these websites so people can easily support if they are inclined to do so, able to do so. Please stay safe brother and please give our best wishes and our solidarity to all of the passengers on the Perseverance today.

**EL:** We'll do, we'll do. Thank you very much, Dimitri. Thank you very much.

**DL:** And we're signing off from Sparta, Greece and somewhere between Sicily and the Western coast of Greece for a Reason2Resist.

**END**

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