



Key Questions and Answers on the Gaza Flotilla

Here are a few examples of some of the most overheard questions following the Gaza Flotilla Tragedy and J Street's answers. If you'd like to see another question answered on this page, send us an email at [info \[at\] jstreet \[dot\] org](mailto:info@jstreet.org).

Q: Why didn't the boat go to Ashdod and unload supplies, as the IDF offered?

A: The flotilla's organizers were trying to break the blockade and Israel knew that. It is obvious that the flotilla was not simply a humanitarian aid mission but also a strategic effort to force an Israeli response and to bring attention to the issue of the ongoing Israeli blockade of Gaza.

The proper response to the flotilla would have been – and to future ships, will be – a shift to a policy that sensibly protects Israel, prevents weapons importation and allows in all other humanitarian and basic supplies.

Q: Weren't the Israeli Defense Forces acting in self-defense?

A: Video does show that the IDF soldiers were attacked by a violent mob, and we hope that an independent inquiry will determine the exact circumstances. However, the major lingering question is why soldiers were sent onto these ships in the first place - the strategy itself placed the soldiers in an exceptionally difficult situation and predictably led to the tragic outcome.

Q: Was the flotilla funded by Hamas allies and terrorist agents?

A: There are a lot of questions that will need to be answered in the days ahead about all aspects of this incident. Even presuming the worst about the people on the boats and the people who funded them – there is little strategic justification or rationale for either the underlying blockade policy or the response that was planned and carried out.

The Flotilla organizers, regardless of their politics or where their funding comes from, have now succeeded not only in creating negative publicity but also in highlighting for the world that Israel's actions and policies go far beyond measures necessary to prevent the import of weapons and other material aid to terrorists into the Gaza Strip.

Q: Doesn't Israel have a right to defend itself and impose a blockade on weapons headed to Hamas in Gaza for use against Israel?

A: Of course, J Street believes Israel has the right to act to prevent weapons from ending up in Hamas' hands. The question is not whether or not Israel had the right, but whether it was wise to act in this manner to enforce a counterproductive blockade that does not effectively deny Hamas weaponry, increases Hamas' stature at home and abroad, further undermines Israel's international reputation, and contributes to humanitarian strife in Gaza.

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Q: How can Israel be the one to investigate itself? Shouldn't the International Community do that?

J Street supports a credible, independent commission that would provide the world with a full and complete report into the causes and circumstances surrounding the day's events and establish responsibility for the violence and bloodshed as similar commissions have in the past. An immediate inquiry, led by an impartial figure outside the government, can produce a report that would be viewed as fair by Israel and the wider international community.

Q: Hamas refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist - why shouldn't Israel blockade them?

Make no mistake – Hamas is an organization that threatens Israel, uses terror and is holding Gilad Shalit hostage. We should recognize at the outset that it is a dangerous organization that must be dealt with openly and honestly as such.

The appropriate question is what the best strategy is for dealing with them. Israel is right to put into place a rigorous system of border control that will ensure that weapons and materials clearly intended for terror purposes do not enter Gaza – and there would be international support for such efforts.

However, the present policy of total closure goes far beyond measures needed simply for security – and the consequences of that policy are actually undermining Israel's long-term interests and security. There is no justification for keeping out humanitarian supplies (food, medicine and the like). There is no reason not to work with the UN to provide the materials it needs to rebuild damaged schools and construct new ones to meet demand. Actions such as these – not to mention the raid on the flotilla – damage Israel's standing in the world, continue its march toward becoming a pariah state, ratchet up hatred and tension among the Palestinians – and make Israel less secure in the long run.

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