



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Free Gaza Flotilla

As delivered by Charge d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the joint FSC/Permanent Council, Vienna
June 1, 2010

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Free Gaza Flotilla

The United States deeply regrets the tragic loss of life and injuries suffered among those involved in the incident today aboard the Gaza-bound ships. We are working to ascertain the facts, and expect that the Israeli government will conduct a full and credible investigation.

The United States remains deeply concerned by the suffering of civilians in Gaza. We will continue to engage the Israelis on a daily basis to expand the scope and type of goods allowed into Gaza to address the full range of the population's humanitarian and recovery needs. We will continue to work closely with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, along with international NGOs and the UN, to provide adequate access for humanitarian goods, including reconstruction materials, through the border crossings, while bearing in mind the Government of Israel's legitimate security concerns. However, Hamas' interference with international assistance shipments and work of nongovernmental organizations, and its use and endorsement of violence, complicates efforts in Gaza. Mechanisms exist for the transfer of humanitarian assistance to Gaza by governments and groups that wish to do so. These mechanisms should be used for the benefit of all those in Gaza.

Ultimately, this incident underscores the need to move ahead quickly with negotiations that can lead to a comprehensive peace in the region.