



Global Sumud Flotilla Interception and International Law

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Abstract: On 31st of August 2025 multinational, people-powered and non-violent activists gathered a flotilla -carrying humanitarian aid- to end Israel's illegal siege on Gaza and draw attention on the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people. In its first mission, Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) launched 43 boats with 462 participants from all over the World. However, the flotilla was intercepted by Israel navy forces in the high seas. Almost all ships were intercepted, and their communication systems have been jammed during the interventions. All participants were kidnapped and brought to Israel, and they were subjected to mistreatment. The interception took place on the high seas; therefore, the legal assessment conducted under international law in this study is divided into two sections. The first concerns maritime jurisdiction areas in terms of the law of the sea and the law applicable therein, as well as naval blockade's legality that imposed on Gaza for years. The second sub-heading will be the basic rules of international humanitarian and human rights law that are allegedly violated by intercepting the fleet and treatment of the activists in general.

Keywords: Global Sumud Flotilla, International Law, Maritime Jurisdiction Areas, Naval Blockade, Palestine

Introduction

The Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) was an international, people-powered movement coordinating non-violent actions by land and sea to end Israel's illegal siege on Gaza and the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people. In its first mission, GSF launched 43 boats with 462 participants from over 45 countries in the largest coordinated civilian flotilla ever organized.¹ Coordinated by grassroots organizers, seafarers, doctors, artists, lawyers, and activists from across continents.² Building on decades of Palestinian resistance and international solidarity, the GSF stands as a collective act of conscience; challenging international complicity and demanding an end to the siege and genocide. Independent of any government or political party, GSF was guided by a shared commitment to justice, dignity, and liberation."³ The term "Sumud" means "steadfastness" in Arabic, which shows the determination of the Palestinians' supporters to fight against the blockade. The flotilla is not only a physical manifestation of aid delivery, but also political statement about the rights of Palestinians and their entitlement to receive international assistance through their territorial waters.⁴ Although there are many issues that need to be examined from the perspective of public international law; this study will first mention the details of interception to GSF; and then analyse that intervention in terms of law of the sea rules. This section will provide a brief examination of maritime jurisdiction areas and naval blockades. Subsequently, the issue will be evaluated under the international humanitarian and human rights law. Finally, a general assessment will be provided.

¹ The Flotilla was composed of many different flag states the name and the flag states are as follows: Polish Flag: Free Willy, Captain Nikos, Florida, Oxygono, Seulle, Hio, Grande Blu, Ahed Tamimi, Australe, Pavlos, Wahoo, Mango, Vangleis, Huga; Italian Flag: Morgana, Otaria, Aurora, MiaMia, Maria, Alakatalla, Meteque, Selvaggia, Fair Lady; Spanish Flag: Jeannot, Yulara, Spectre, Adara, Adagio, Estrella; UK Flag: Inana, Alma, Sirius, Ohwayla; Others: All In - French Flag; Karma; Amsterdam and Mohammad Bhar - Dutch Flag; Deir Yassine - Algerian Flag; Catalina - German Flag. See: Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF), "Global Sumud Flotilla Press" (Date accessed 03 December 2025).

² People from 37 countries were taking part in the flotilla, including 30 from Spain, 22 from Italy, 21 from Türkiye and 12 from Malaysia. Elizabeth Melimopoulos, "Israel intercepts last Gaza Sumud flotilla vessel: What we know so far", *Aljazeera*, (1 October 2025), 1.

³ GSF, "Global Sumud Flotilla Press".

⁴ Zarar Bin Saleem - Maryam Zardad - Zeeshan Khurshid, "The Global Sumud Flotilla: Defying Blockades, Defending Human Rights" *Pakistan Journal of Social Science Review*, 4/5 (2025), 452.

I. The Interception to Global Sumud Flotilla

On 31st August 2025 the main part of the Flotilla launched from Spain. Italian and Spanish officials had announced that their navies would accompany the fleet and cease monitoring 150 nautical miles (nm) off the Gaza coasts.¹ Because Israel had declared the 150 nm (nearly 280 km) zone off Gaza a restricted area. Although there were several interventions and incidents during the fleet's journey, the main intervention started on 1st of October 2025. On that day, the GSF was intercepted illegally by Israeli naval forces in international waters and from that day through the morning of the 3rd of October. As previously stated, a total of 462 peaceful activists were present on the vessels that were intercepted, with some of these individuals displaying the insignia of international organisations.² Participants were forcibly removed to Israel, along with their vessels, which were seized illegally and transported to Israel. Following the interception, all activists were held incommunicado. This was achieved by jamming communication systems and subjecting some of them to degrading treatment and the use of water cannons.³

Image 1: Global Sumud Flotilla's Location and Intervention Areas⁴



Most of the ships intercepted near estimated between 60-70 nm route toward Gaza shores. The Israeli Foreign Ministry announced that it had seized some of the ships in the GSF and that the passengers that detained, had been taken to an Israeli port. The Ministry shared images of climate activist Greta Thunberg, a participant in the fleet, standing next to an Israeli soldier on the seized ship.⁵

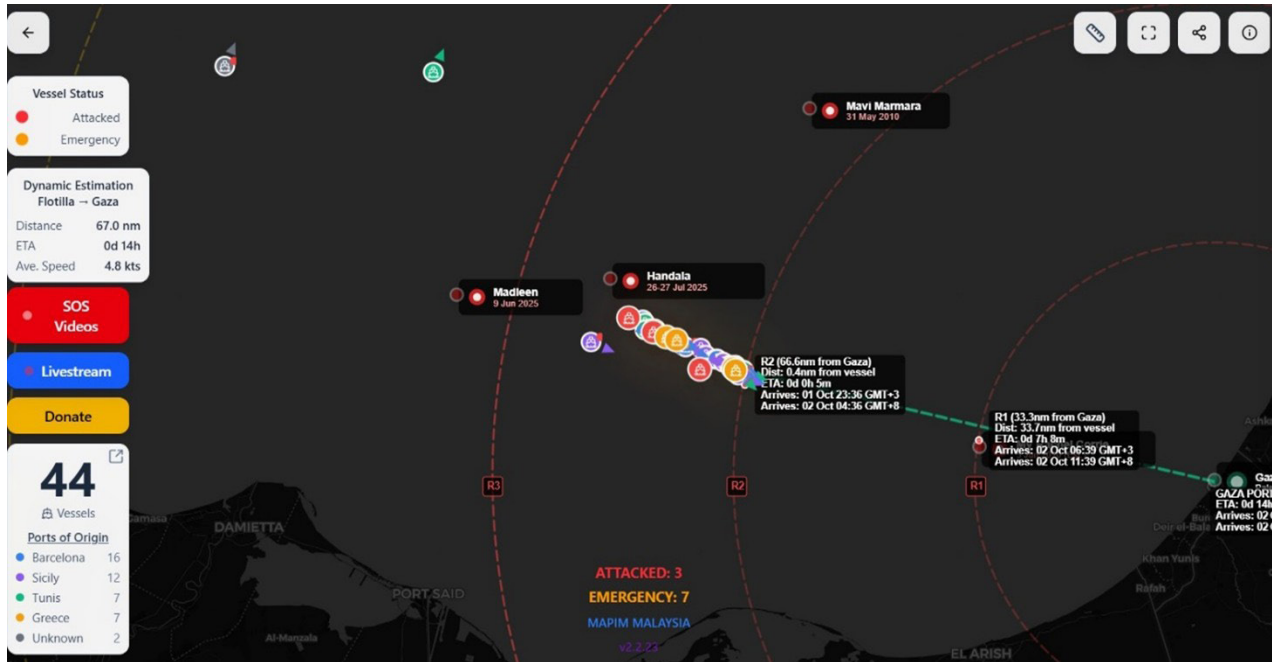
¹ BBC New Türkçe, "Sumud Filosu'ndaki yüzlerce kişi İsrail cezaevlerine nakledildi", (1 October 2025), 1.

² BBC New Türkçe, "Sumud Filosu'ndaki yüzlerce kişi İsrail cezaevlerine nakledildi", 1.

³ Melimopoulos, "Israel intercepts last Gaza Sumud flotilla vessel: What we know so far", 1.

⁴ Hanna Duggal, "Gaza Sumud flotilla: How Israel breaks international maritime law" *Aljazeera*, (1 October 2025), 1.

⁵ Gazete Oksijen, "İsrail'den Küresel Sumud Filosu'na saldırı: 25 Türk ve Greta Thunberg'in de aralarında olduğu aktivistler gözaltında", (2 October 2025), 1.

Image 2: Global Sumud Flotilla's Interception Area⁶

II. The Legal Assessment under International Law

The legal assessment of the interception under public international law has been divided in two parts: First; as the interception occurred in the high seas, the incident should be examined under the law of the sea. Particularly in terms of maritime jurisdiction areas and the naval blockade. Secondly, it should be debated which fundamental principles of international humanitarian and human rights rules has violated by that intervention.

A. Law of the sea

The legal assessment should be made under the main law of the sea legislation, which is 1982 the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea⁷ (herein after; 1982 UNCLOS or UNCLOS). It should begin with which area of the sea that the interception occurred and whether Israel is competent to declare naval blockade.

1. Maritime jurisdiction areas

The main resources of the law of the sea rules are customary international law.⁸ As known the customary rules are binding for every State, unless there it is "persistent objection" to a customary rule.⁹ Israel is not a party to 1982 UNCLOS, However, it is a party to Geneva Convention on Continental Shelf¹⁰ signed in 1958 and it is bound by the customary international law, as reflected in UNCLOS. Israel has declared 12nm territorial water and beyond that area is high seas.¹¹ However, according to UNCLOS, a coastal state can declare Contiguous Zone (CZ) or Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) beyond the territorial sea. Which they provide only restricted rights on claimed areas. At CZ; "Coastal State may exercise the control necessary to: ... prevent infringement of its customs, fiscal, immigration or sanitary laws and regulations within its territory or territorial sea;"¹² and at EEZ "sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents and winds".¹³

⁶ Gazete Oksijen, "İsrail'den Küresel Sumud Filosu'na saldırı: 25 Türk ve Greta Thunberg'in de aralarında olduğu aktivistler gözaltında", (2 October 2025), 1.

⁷ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Montego Bay, 10 December 1982, UNTS. No. 31363.

⁸ Sevin Toluner, *Milletlerarası Hukuk Dersleri Devletin Yetkisi*, (İstanbul: 1988), s. 54 and further. Also see: Selami Kuran, *Uluslararası Deniz Hukuku*, (İstanbul: Beta, 2021), s. 2.

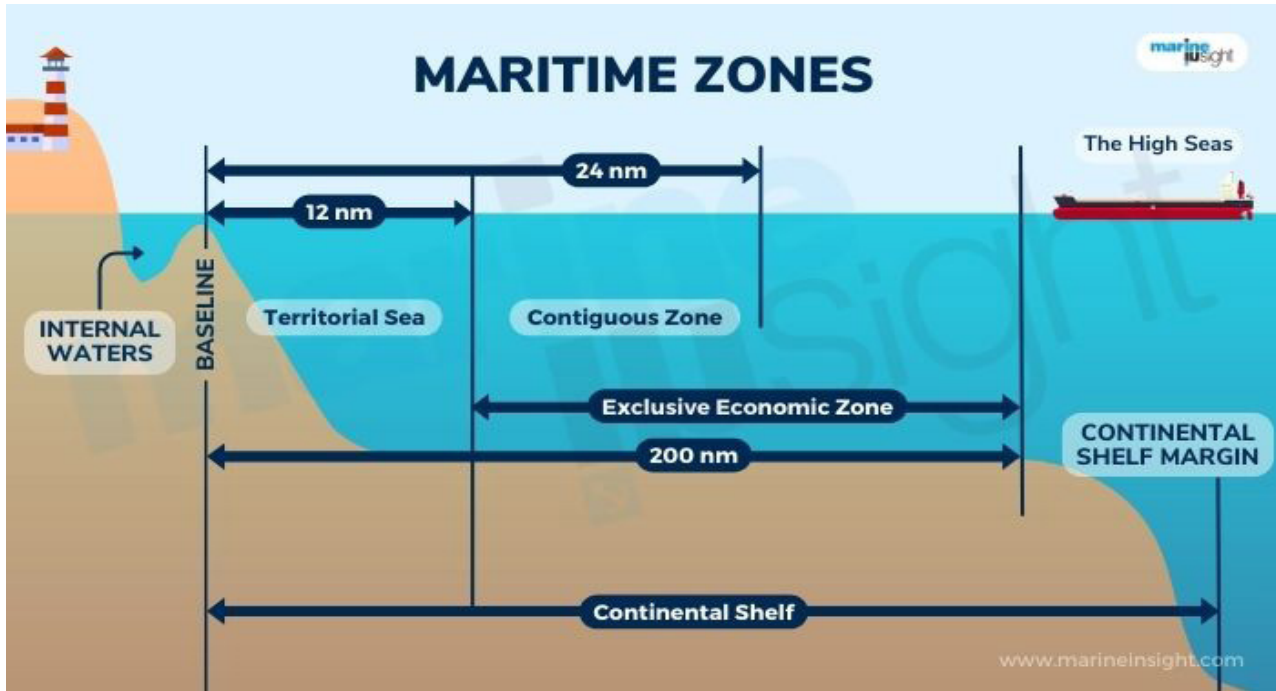
⁹ Malcom N. Shaw, *International Law*, (Cambridge: 2008), p. 72 and further.

¹⁰ 4. Convention on the Continental Shelf, Geneva, 28 April 1958, UNTS. 7302.

¹¹ Tali Thau Sade, *Maritime Zones Law 2014 for the State of Israel*, (IMO International Maritime Law Institute: LLM Thesis, 2014), 4.

¹² UNCLOS art. 33.

¹³ UNCLOS art. 56.

Image 3: Maritime Zones¹⁴

High Seas area defined at UNCLOS as: “all parts of the sea that are not included in the exclusive economic zone, in the territorial sea or in the internal waters of a State, or in the archipelagic waters of an archipelagic State”.¹⁵ “No State may validly purport to subject any part of the high seas to its sovereignty.”¹⁶ The fact that no state can claim sovereignty over the high seas does not mean that this area is unregulated. As a rule, the flag state has jurisdiction over the high seas. This jurisdiction is based on the state’s authority by virtue of the ship’s nationality. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Pursuant to the UNCLOS, in cases of suspected piracy, slave trade, drug smuggling, unauthorized broadcasting, ships without nationality, and in case of “hot pursuit”, other state ships have the right to inspect and board ships for their flag and documents. War situations are assessed separately. In such cases, subject to the provisions of the agreements concluded, the laws of the states shall apply, taking into account the special legal rules of the states. Times of war are assessed separately and subject to the provisions of any bilateral or multilateral agreements; the private law rules of states are considered regarding the law applicable to ships on the high seas.¹⁷

However, under the 1982 UNCLOS, intervention by states other than the flag state may be considered legitimate only in certain circumstances. In case of Piracy (Art. 101), transporting of slaves (Art. 99), Illicit traffic in narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances (Art.108), unauthorized broadcasting (Art. 109), ships without nationality or in case of hot pursuit (Art. 111), other state ships have the right to inspect and board ships for their flag and documents.

Israeli Naval forces intercepted all the vessel, seized the ships and detained the activists – including climate activist Greta Thunberg – while they were still in High Seas. Almost all interceptions took place approximately between 60-70 nm (near 130-140 km) off the coast of Gaza.¹⁸ The Italian and Spanish navies accompanied the fleet and cease monitoring 150 nm off the coast of Gaza. Because Israel declared 150 nm as a restricted area.¹⁹ Although naval blockades and regional restrictions may be considered valid methods of warfare, as it is discussed below, Israel’s implementation of these measures disregards basic humanitarian needs and the rules of the international humanitarian law. Consequently, the restricted area in question has no validity under international law. However, escorting merchant ships with navies is not a new phenomenon in the history. During the Iran-Iraq war, in the Persian Gulf, some of the merchant ships belong the United States and some other states and in order to protect their ships they escorted with their navies. After that in 1988, one of the warships of United States (USS Samuel B. Roberts) was damaged in the high seas, United States attacked the

¹⁴ Rishabh Srivastava, “Understanding International Waters: Boundaries, Jurisdiction and Legal Implications”, *Marine Insight*, (2023), 1.

¹⁵ UNCLOS art. 86.

¹⁶ UNCLOS art. 89.

¹⁷ Sevin Toluner, *Milletlerarası Hukuk Dersleri Devletin Yetkisi*, 304 and further.

¹⁸ Mammad Ismayilov, “The Gaza Blockade and the Global Sumud Flotilla: Illegal vs. Legal?”, *Politics Today*, (7 October 2025), 1.

¹⁹ GSF, “Global Sumud Flotilla Press”.

Iranian oil platforms, claiming legitimate self-defence.²⁰ Even though navies escorting the ships might seem safe for the flotilla carrying humanitarian aid; once the navies were that zone probably there would be a military tension. Therefore Spanish and Italian navies did not enter the Israeli restricted area, even it is not legal.

For the rules and reasons mentioned above, the interception of the GSF was a violation of norms of the international customary law related to maritime zones rules and rights under UNCLOS. But also, according to articles 88 and 301 of UNCLOS Israel should have provided peaceful and safe passage²¹ of humanitarian aid carrying vessels.²² Moreover, according to Art. 110, even the exceptional situations occurred at the high seas (such as piracy, hot pursuit etc.) the States rather than the Flag States, have the “right of visit” of vessels. The interception and detaining the activists violate UNCLOS and the related Flag States sovereign rights as well. As mentioned above, the acts of illegal possession of the vessel and abduction of crew on High Seas should be pursued by each flag state and if it constitutes a crime should fall within their domestic jurisdiction.²³

The interception of the GSF constitutes a violation of customary norms of international law as accepted under Articles 19, 88 and 301 of UNCLOS, which requires that states respect the peaceful and safe passage of vessels. It is evident that the State of Israel does not possess the authority to intercept civilian vessels in accordance with the provisions set out in UNCLOS Article 110. This assertion is further substantiated by the fact that none of the exemptions enumerated in Article 110 (a) – (e) have been invoked. Furthermore, the attack on vessels and subsequent seizure on the High Seas constitutes an additional act of aggression by Israeli forces. The legal framework applicable on each vessel is that of the domestic law of its flag state in the context of the high seas. The aggression by an Israeli military warship on a vessel on the High Seas is to be regarded as an attack and infringement of the sovereignty of the flag state, as well as a contravention of the law of the sea.

Image 4: GSF Position During the Interception²⁴



2. Naval blockade

Description of blockade in international law is as follows: “An operation involving naval and air forces by which a belligerent completely prevents movement by sea from or to a port or coast belonging to or occupied by an enemy belligerent. To be mandatory, that is, for third States to be obliged to respect it, the blockade must be effective. This means that it must be maintained by a force sufficient to prevent all access to the enemy coast. The belligerent must declare the existence of the blockade. The belligerent must also specify and the starting date, geographical limits of the blockaded territory and time allowed to neutral vessels to leave. This declaration must be notified to all neutral powers and to the local authorities.”²⁵

²⁰ Yusuf Aksar, *Teoride ve Uygulamada Uluslararası Hukuk I*, (Ankara: Seçkin, 2023), 130 and footnote 270.

²¹ “Peaceful use has not been specifically recognized as a governing principle of the high seas, nor has it been specifically prohibited by customary law. While it is an open question to what extent the principle is embodied in the freedom of the high seas, the latter has been a freedom always enjoyed, according to Grotius.” See, Joan Eltmén, “A Peace Zone on the High Seas: Managing the Commons for Equitable Use,” *International Legal Perspectives*, 5 (1993), 50.

²² Art. 88 is titled “Reservation the high seas for peaceful purposes” and Art. 301 is “Peaceful use of the seas”.

²³ Duggal, “Gaza Sumud flotilla: How Israel breaks international maritime law”, 1.

²⁴ Nathan Williams, “Activists say Gaza flotilla circled by Israeli warship”, *BBC*, (1 October 2025), 1.

²⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “Blocked”, (1 October 2025)

Israeli Blockade on Gaza started after Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in July 2007, Israel declared Gaza “enemy zone” in September 2007. Afterwards Israel began imposing restrictions on the movement of goods.²⁶ This process continued in 2008 with the declaration of a “combat zone,” and in 2009 as a “military enclosure”²⁷, declaring a blockade on January 6, 2009.²⁸

Image 5: Gaza Naval Blockade Area²⁹



There is officially no international treaty in force concerning directly the application of naval blockades in public international law. However, there are some international customary rules and legal documents that could be classified as “applicable law” on the matter:

- i) The application of a blockade in international law is first encountered in the context of measures to be taken under the UN Charter Art. 42, entitled “Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression”. The Art. 42 is as follows: “*Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.*”
- ii) Declaration Respecting Maritime Law, Paris, 16 April 1856. Para. 4: “*Blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective, that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy.*”³⁰
- iii) Declaration Concerning the Laws of Naval War: Art. 3. “The question whether a blockade is effective is a question of fact”; Art. 5. “A blockade must be applied impartially to the ships of all nations”; Art. 8. A blockade, in order to be binding, must be declared in accordance with Article 9, and notified in accordance with Articles 11 and 16; Art. 18. The blockading forces must not bar access to neutral ports or coasts.”³¹
- iv) Oxford Manual on the Laws of Naval War, Art. 30 Blockade: “*Ports and coasts belonging to the enemy or occupied by him may be subjected to blockade according to the rules of international law.*”³²
- v) Although in international law the use of force is prohibited -according to UN Charter art. 2(4), armed conflicts cannot be completely prevented. Therefore, rules governing armed conflicts were established, leading 1949 Geneva Conventions³³, which consist of four separate treaties. The Second Convention is devoted to the protection of wounded, sick and shipwrecked persons at sea. Some of the principles in Protocol I apply only to naval attacks that directly affect civilians on land and therefore do not cover attacks by naval forces on objects at sea, particularly ships and aircraft. Therefore, the 1977 Additional Protocol 1 to 1949 Geneva Conventions has not led to the development of a law of armed conflict at sea like that of armed conflict on land.³⁴

²⁶ ICRC, “Israel, Blockade of Gaza and the Flotilla Incident, How Does Law Protect in War”, (03 December 2025).

²⁷ Turkish National Commission of Inquiry, February 2011, Ankara, 39.

²⁸ F. Seyda Kahraman, “Uluslararası Hukuk Açısından İsrail’in Gazze’de Uyguladığı Deniz Ablukası”, *Uluslararası Hukukta Filistin Meselesi*, eds. Ali Kerem Kayhan - Ali Osman Karaoğlu, (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2025), 181.

²⁹ Wikipedia, “Blockade of the Gaza Strip”, (03 December 2025).

³⁰ Declaration Respecting Maritime Law. Paris, 16 April 1856.

³¹ Declaration Concerning the Laws of Naval War, London, 26 February 1909.

³² 1913 Oxford Manual on the Laws of Naval War Governing the Relations Between Belligerents.

³³ The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, International Committee of the Red Cross,

³⁴ Kahraman, “İsrail’in Gazze’de Uyguladığı Deniz Ablukası”, 185-186.

vi) In this respect, the only directly applicable legislation on the issue would be the 1994 San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea (San Remo Manual)³⁵ which provisions that constitute international customary law. San Remo Manual defines a naval blockade as follows: “A naval blockade is an operation aimed at preventing all ships or aircraft, regardless of their nationality, from entering or leaving the coast or port of an enemy state.”³⁶ Essentially a method of warfare, the purpose of this operation is to eliminate or reduce the enemy’s ability to continue the war by cutting off its access to the high seas and all commercial relations with other states. Either side in the war may resort to this method for this purpose.³⁷

On the one hand, Israel argued that the blockade was a necessary precaution to prevent dual-use goods from entering Gaza and to protect itself from violence by Hamas and claimed that it was legal under the San Remo Manual. On the other hand, critics such as the UN Human Rights Council and the International Committee of the Red Cross argued that the blockade was illegal under international humanitarian law because it imposed hardship on the civilian population disproportionate to the military objective.³⁸ In reaction to that blockade in Gaza, various international flotilla movements have been started with the aim of breaking the siege and bringing in humanitarian aid. The first major flotilla was called the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, which was held in 2010. As known Israeli forces intervened that flotilla in the high seas and killed ten activists and it sparked outrage worldwide.³⁹ It is known as Mavi Marmara incident.⁴⁰

The clash of the GSF with the Israeli naval forces reminded the severity of the legal and political battle concerning the legality of the Gaza blockade, as it also discussed earlier at Mavi Marmara incident. While the Israeli government claims its right to enforce the blockade, the rights of Palestinians and those who support Palestinian rights, such as the participants of the flotilla, allege that it violates the rights of civilians under international law. It may be seen this time the intervention did not cause the death of the activists as in Mavi Marmara, however the violation inside of Gaza is much more devastating. The legal standoff has remained in the spotlight of the world, and the flotilla has remained a central point of discussion on sovereignty, human rights and the application of the law of the sea norms.⁴¹

As mentioned, the GSF was intercepted on the high seas it was not in the Israeli jurisdiction area. The GSF was never intended to go into Israeli territorial waters. Israel has no legal jurisdiction over 12 nm territorial waters. The activists were detained arbitrarily.⁴²

The 1994 San Remo Manual states that the imposition of a blockade must be announced and notified to all belligerent and neutral states. Such an announcement must specify commencement, duration, location and scope of the blockade, as well as the period within which neutral state vessels may leave the blockade coastline.⁴³ Furthermore, any changes to the blockade must also be announced in the same manner.⁴⁴ The blockade must be applied effectively and impartially to all vessels. San Remo Manual also states that commercial vessels reasonably believed to have violated the blockade may be seized and that commercial vessels that clearly resist seizure after -prior- warning may be attacked.⁴⁵ From this perspective, Israel’s claim appears to have a basis in the customary rules of maritime warfare.

However, from the perspective of humanitarian law, there are situations where blockades are prohibited. If i) the sole purpose of the blockade is to starve the civilian population or deprive it of the basic necessities essential for survival or ii) the harm caused to the civilian population is greater than the concrete and direct military advantage achieved or expected to be achieved by the blockade, declaration or implementation of blockade is prohibited.⁴⁶

³⁵ San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea (1994).

³⁶ Andrew Sanger, “The contemporary law of blockade and the Gaza freedom flotilla,” *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law*, 13, (2010), s. 409.

³⁷ Ahmet Hamdi Topal, “İsrail’in Gazze Ablukası ve Mavi Marmara Saldırısı”, *Public and Private International Law Bulletin*, 32/1, (2012), 110.

³⁸ James L. Newell, “Sovereignty on trial: Italy, Israel, and the battle for constitutional values,” *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 17/4, (2025), 1–4.

³⁹ Saleem - Zardad - Khurshid, “The Global Sumud Flotilla”, 452.

⁴⁰ For a detailed analyse, see Sevda Keskin, “Mavi Marmara Gemisine Yapılan Müdahalenin Uluslararası Deniz Hukuku Açısından İncelenmesi”, *Uluslararası Hukukta Filistin Meselesi*, eds. Ali Kerem Kayhan - Ali Osman Karaoğlu, (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2025), 219.

⁴¹ Saleem - Zardad - Khurshid, “The Global Sumud Flotilla”, 459.

⁴² Duggal, “Gaza Sumud flotilla: How Israel breaks international maritime law”, 1.

⁴³ 1994 San Remo Manual paras. 93 and 94 “93. A blockade shall be declared and notified to all belligerents and neutral States. 94. The declaration shall specify the commencement, duration, location, and extent of the blockade and the period within which vessels of neutral States may leave the blockaded coastline.”

⁴⁴ “Art. 101: The cessation, temporary lifting, re-establishment, extension or other alteration of a blockade must be declared and notified as in paragraphs 93 and 94.”

⁴⁵ “98. Merchant vessels believed on reasonable grounds to be breaching a blockade may be captured. Merchant vessels which, after prior warning, clearly resist capture may be attacked.”

⁴⁶ 1994 San Remo Manual para. 102.” 102 The declaration or establishment of a blockade is prohibited if:

The activists at GSF did not intend to go to Israel. Nevertheless, they were forcibly relocated to Israel. The Israeli naval blockade, which has now lasted for 17 years, is an intrinsic element of the ongoing occupation.⁴⁷ Consequently, it does not constitute a short-term measure in time of armed conflict as specified in the San Remo manual. Consequently, it does not constitute a short-term measure in time of armed conflict as specified in the San Remo manual. It is evident that the San Remo Rules explicitly stipulate the prohibition of the obstruction of humanitarian supplies.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the Human Rights Council Report on the Mavi Marmara commission report asserts that the naval blockade is in violation of international law and lacks a legal foundation.⁴⁹ It is evident that the intervention of the Israeli Armed Forces against the GSF on board the Mavi Marmara ship in international waters constitutes a violation of the established principles of international law with regard to the imposition of a blockade.⁵⁰

B. International human rights and humanitarian law

Aside from the violations of law of the sea, Israel's genocide and violations of humanitarian law⁵¹ in Gaza have been determined by the UN Commission of Inquiry. The naval blockade is plainly a part of the machinery of such genocide. Interfering with the safe passage of the GSF is undoubtedly a clear violation of international humanitarian law. The other crimes committed by Israel are as follows:

The List of Acts and Crimes Committed by Israel⁵² and the Violated Legislation:

1. *Attack of the Vessels and seizure thereof:* As mentioned above violation of UNCLOS and customary international law and also violation of the sovereign rights of Flag States.
2. *A series of drone attacks by Israel against the Flotilla:* These acts constitute a violation of the sovereign rights of the flag state, as well as a breach of the prohibition on the use or threat of force under the UN Charter art 2/4. Furthermore, the fundamental right to life of individuals has been threatened.
3. *The phenomenon of abduction, in addition to arbitrary arrest, has been observed in relation to participants:* It is evident that there has been a contravention of Article 9 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The principle of prohibition of arbitrary arrests is to be observed.⁵³ The activists were neither combatants nor a military threat. The activists are considered to be bona fide citizens engaged in a humanitarian mission. Furthermore, they are not considered to be irregular migrants attempting to enter Israeli territory, in contravention of Israeli immigration legislation.
4. *The transfer of detained civilians to the State of Israel by force:* The present situation constitutes a violation of the Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. As stated in Article 49 of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949.⁵⁴

- (a) it has the sole purpose of starving the civilian population or denying it other objects essential for its survival; or
- (b) the damage to the civilian population is, or may be expected to be, excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated from the blockade."

⁴⁷ The territorial occupation (it also means the naval blockade) found illegal in the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the Wall Decision. See also Sümeyya Murat, "Doğu Kudüs ve İşgal Altındaki Filistin Topraklarında İnşa Edilen Duvarın Hukuki Sonuçlarına İlişkin Danışma Görüşü", *Uluslararası Hukukta Filistin Meselesi*, eds. Ali Kerem Kayhan - Ali Osman Karaoğlu, (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2025), s. 237-278.

⁴⁸ 1994 San Remo Manual para. 103. "If the civilian population of the blockaded territory is inadequately provided with food and other objects essential for its survival, the blockading party must provide for free passage of such foodstuffs and other essential supplies, subject to:

- (a) the right to prescribe the technical arrangements, including search, under which such passage is permitted; and
- (b) the condition that the distribution of such supplies shall be made under the local supervision of a Protecting Power or a humanitarian organization which offers guarantees of impartiality, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross."

⁴⁹ Human Rights Council, *Report of the international fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, resulting from the Israeli attacks on the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian assistance*, A/HRC/15/21, 27 September 2010, para. 261.

⁵⁰ Yusuf Aksar, *Teoride ve Uygulamada Uluslararası Hukuk-II*, (Ankara: Seçkin, 2021), s. 446-447.

⁵¹ For a detailed analysis see: Mehmet Özyürek, "İşgal, İnsancıl Hukuk ve İnsan Hakları: İsrail Yerleşim Birimleri", *Uluslararası Hukukta Filistin Meselesi*, eds. Ali Kerem Kayhan - Ali Osman Karaoğlu, (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2025), s. 279-298.

⁵² Duggal, "Gaza Sumud flotilla: How Israel breaks international maritime law", 1.

⁵³ "1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law. 2. Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him. 3. Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release. It shall not be the general rule that persons awaiting trial shall be detained in custody, but release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceedings, and, should occasion arise, for execution of the judgement. 4. Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful. 5. Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation."

⁵⁴ "Article 49 - Deportations, transfers, evacuations:

Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.

5. *The use of water cannons against peaceful civilians in the high seas constitutes a violation of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits physical violence and inhuman treatment:* The prohibition of violence against civilians is a fundamental tenet of international law. It is also a violation of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as it is: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

6. *The unlawful processing of activists as “illegal immigrants” before the Immigration Authority,* court hearings conducted in the absence of legal representation, and coerced signature-taking on documents acknowledging illegal entry into Israel. It is evident that there has been a contravention of the right to a fair trial, liberty, and security as outlined in Article 9 and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁵⁵

7. *The defamation of peaceful citizens can be considered a form of illegal stigmatisation:* Insults, Defamation, and the Slandorous Labelling of Activists as “Terrorists” is violation of the Right to Dignity at 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 1.

Conclusion

The Global Sumud Flotilla was established entirely for humanitarian purposes by volunteers from many different countries, has drawn the attention of the international community to the crimes committed and being committed by Israel, causing a great stir. Ultimately, both the illegality of Israel’s intervention against the Sumud Fleet and allegedly its continued commission of the crime of genocide in Gaza, despite international judicial and precautionary measures, are abundantly clear. However, entirely humanitarian and multinational activist actions such as the GSF will gradually lead to the recognition of Israel’s crimes and, hopefully, their eventual cessation.

The reactions and voices raised in the international community as in the Mavi Marmara incident resulted in the intervention against the GSF fleet not being as deadly as earlier attacks. Therefore, the activist movements and global “sumud” (steadfastness) is making at least a “change” to the system.

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Nevertheless, the Occupying Power may undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand. Such evacuations may not involve the displacement of protected persons outside the bounds of the occupied territory except when for material reasons it is impossible to avoid such displacement. Persons thus evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased.

The Occupying Power undertaking such transfers or evacuations shall ensure, to the greatest practicable extent, that proper accommodation is provided to receive the protected persons, that the removals are effected in satisfactory conditions of hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and that members of the same family are not separated.

The Protecting Power shall be informed of any transfers and evacuations as soon as they have taken place.

The Occupying Power shall not detain protected persons in an area particularly exposed to the dangers of war unless the security of the population or imperative military reasons so demand.

The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

⁵⁵ Duggal, “Gaza Sumud flotilla: How Israel breaks international maritime law”, 1.

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