*Check Against Delivery*

Statement by H.E. Aharon Leshno Yaar

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To the United Nations, Geneva

Item 7

Human Rights Council

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Mr. President,

As the seasons change, one constant in this hall is that no matter the time of year, this body returns to the eternal agenda item 7, its obsessive and unique examination of one situation and one State, Israel, as if there were no other human rights concerns to debate.

As we have already spent two days discussing the events that took place off the coast of my region, it might be worthwhile to address some more recent facts that have come to light since we last met. The image of what differentiates between a true humanitarian mission and what can only be understood as an extremely violent provocation, has become clear.

**Besides the ordinary passengers on board the** ***Mavi Marmara*, there were 40 Turkish IHH operatives. These were hard core activists, composed of Turkish citizens who had been recruited especially for the mission. They had a hierarchy which was clearly-defined and were separated from the ordinary passengers. They boarded the ship in Istanbul without undergoing a security check, as opposed to the other passengers, who boarded in Antalya after a full examination**. **Some of the IHH operatives had stickers on their clothing reading “Security Protection.”** The Captain of the *Mavi* *Marmara*, Mehmut Tuval, stated later that he was quite concerned that the actions of the IHH recruits would cause violence saying: "they were preparing for violence against the soldiers."

The publication of photographs in the Turkish media and supposedly "heroic" statements of many of the violent rabble-rousers have been fascinating and certainly eye-opening.

One example was the words of IHH Official Hussein Orush on Al-Jazeera TV from 5 June: "All the passengers on board the ship were ready for this outcome. Everybody wanted and was ready to become a martyr. [...] Our goal was to reach Gaza or to die trying. All the ship's passengers were ready for this. IHH was ready for this too."

No, Mr. Orush and his friends were not really concerned about the needs of the people of Gaza. If that was the case, they could have more easily acted in cooperation with Israel and ensured that supplies would reach the people. In fact, there were no humanitarian containers whatsoever on the *Mavi Marmara* or on two other ships. In stark contrast, the Irish ship that approached the region a few days later unloaded all of its aid and worked with Israeli officials to affect a quick transfer of aid to Gaza.

It might be interesting to note that Hamas is not very interested in the supplies either. As of 7 June, Israel transferred 26 trucks with various types of aid brought on the other ships which has been unloaded at the Kerem Shalom crossing. The Palestinian side has refused to accept the shipments.

It is interesting that there was no basic foodstuff whatsoever and very little fresh medicine in the aid brought by any of the ships, which is what most of us understand humanitarian aid to be.

In the meantime, Prime Minister Netanhayu stated yesterday:

"Before [the flotilla](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2010/Israel_Navy_warns_flotilla_31-May-2010.htm) set sail for Gaza, we discussed – in various forums – the continuation of our policy toward the Gaza Strip. These discussions continued last week, inter alia, in the meetings I held on the subject with Quartet envoy Tony Blair. The principle guiding our policy is clear – to prevent war materiel from entering Gaza and [to allow the entry of humanitarian aid and non-contraband goods into the Gaza Strip](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2010/Hamas_refuses_flotilla_aid_Gaza_Strip_2-Jun-2010.htm)."

Another enlightening quote came from a Lebanese activist offered to Iranian Press TV on 2 June. The interviewer asked him "During the time you were in Israeli custody, were you subject to any kind of torture?" The Lebanese activist sadly reported: "No, no. Unfortunately not."

The more we learn about the hard core members of the group: the thick envelopes of dollars and euros that each one was holding; the connection of many of them to international terror and extremist Islamic organizations; the crass, hateful radio calls such as *"Go back to Auschwitz"* or *"don't forget 9/11"* in response to the numerous nautical calls from the Israeli navy; the systematic preparation for violent battle in the hours before the arrival of the Israelis onboard; and most tellingly, the *Shahid* style death videos that were filmed by some participants before boarding the ship, all help us understand that this group was deeply determined to instigate a fight.

Mr. President,

Israel will announce, later today, the establishment of an independent committee to analyze the legality of a number of key issues in the events connected to the flotilla, including an examination of international aspects of the events. Chaired by a former Supreme Court justice, the committee will include world renowned experts in international law and military affairs. It will include two respected international observers. Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu stated: "I want the whole truth to come to light. We know the truth. I, the Minister of Defense, other cabinet ministers and the chief of staff will all testify and supply all the facts."

Similarly, the IDF announced last week the forming of an internal investigation into the events to be led by a retired Major-General.

Nevertheless, and sadly, it was not surprising that this Human Right Council, as in the past, quickly voted to form a fact-finding body that cynically predetermines Israel's guilt. The style and lightening fast process of approving this body, without even the minimal respect of consulting with Israel was audacious. Such an uninclusive, arrogant and self-serving process could not even be contemplated for any other country.

In last Friday's International Herald Tribune, the Foreign Ministers of France, Italy and Spain emphasized that any investigation "must be sure to avoid the mistakes made after the submission of the Goldstone report, whose follow-up was exploited by the Human Rights Council, half of whose resolutions, unfortunately, have been devoted to condemning Israel."

As I stated in this hall on 2 June, Israel deeply regrets the loss of life. That said, those who would like to see Israel defenseless and without the right or ability to defend its people will be deeply disappointed. As I have stated here time and again, echoing the words of the leaders of Israel, we seek to live in peace and coexistence with our Palestinian neighbors. We have called repeatedly for direct negotiations, as that is the only way to reach a solution, and hope that the proximity talks will be an important step in that direction. But if some on the Palestinian side prefer threats and violence, Israel will continue to defend itself.

Israel will defend itself here in Geneva, from compulsive agenda items and hate speech like that offered in this hall on 8 June by a Syrian diplomat. What does permitting statements like that without response, without sanction, mean for this body? How can reasonable people, even those who may disagree with Israel's positions, allow such words, which would be criminal hate-crime outside these halls, to pass without comment?

And Israel will continue to defend itself from rocket attacks, from attempts of terrorists to enter Israel to kill its citizens and push our region from one of coexistence and hope to one of violence, extremism, delegitimization and terror.

Mr. President,

One short comment about the announcement of the High Commissioner. Once again, the Human Rights Council has announced a new committee regarding our region. As with its infamous Goldstone Committee, Israel has significant concerns about the balance of the mandate and agenda of this new panel. Israel has often voiced its dismay with the obsessive, one-sided actions of this Council, which have only increased in recent weeks. Israel has already made public detailed information about its investigations into the events of Operation Cast Lead and has promised to continue to do so until the conclusion of such inquiries, regardless of actions in Geneva.