[Pro-Palestinian Activists Only Respect the U.N. When It Suits Them](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/2015/07/05/gaza-flotilla-united-nations/)

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The hypocrisy of the claim that flotillas to Gaza are a “humanitarian” endeavor has now been fully exposed: As [Jonathan Tobin](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/2015/07/02/gaza-flotilla-aid/) noted last week, the latest proved to be carrying a mere two cardboard boxes worth of aid. But pro-Palestinian activists are also guilty of an even more egregious form of hypocrisy: They proclaim all anti-Israel U.N. decisions to be binding international law, but openly flout U.N. decisions that happen to be in Israel’s favor. The Gaza flotillas are a perfect example.

According to the flotilla activists, their [goal](https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/patrick-strickland/swedish-boat-sets-sail-bid-break-gaza-blockade) was “to break the illegal blockade on Gaza.” But a blue-ribbon international [commission](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=39443#.VZUqkkZ8vuU) appointed by U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in 2010 concluded that the blockade is in fact a “legitimate security measure” that fully complies with international law. So the same activists who lambaste Israel for noncompliance with anti-Israel U.N. resolutions – like those against the settlements, or the one [ostensibly granting](http://www.bdsmovement.net/bdsintro) Palestinian refugees a “right of return” to Israel – feel it’s perfectly fine for them to ignore U.N. decisions that don’t serve their cause.

Nor is the Gaza blockade the worst example. Far more egregious is the way pro-Palestinian activists – and indeed, every country in the world except Israel – simply ignores U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, despite it being hands-down the most frequently cited resolution relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

That resolution was deliberately worded to allow Israel to retain some of the territory it captured in 1967. This isn’t mere speculation; the American and British ambassadors to the U.N. at the time, who drafted the resolution, both [said explicitly](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/meaning_of_242.html) that this was the purpose of its wording. And as legal expert Eugene Kontorovich noted in a [terrific analysis](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2534179) in December, the same conclusion emerges from a comparison of 242 to 18 other U.N. resolutions demanding territorial withdrawals. He discovered that 242’s demand for a withdrawal from unspecified “territories,” rather than from “the territories” or “all the territories” or “the whole territory” or to the status quo ante, is unique. And this reinforces the conclusion that the drafters indeed intended to allow Israel to retain some of the territory rather than ceding it all.

Yet today, both America and Britain – along with the entire rest of the world – simply ignore this resolution and insist that Israel must retreat to the pre-1967 lines.

To be clear, I would have no problem with ignoring the U.N. altogether; it’s an organization dominated by dictators that no self-respecting democracy should legitimize, so a principled refusal to honor any of its decisions would be eminently understandable. I’d also have no problem with a position rooted in genuine international law, which is that U.N. decisions are binding and enforceable only when adopted by the U.N. Security Council under Chapter VII. That’s what’s actually written in the U.N. Charter, and what U.N. member states agreed to when they signed the charter, and therefore, no state ever made a legal commitment to obey any other U.N. decision.

But pro-Palestinian activists selectively treat U.N. decisions that favor their cause as “binding international law” while simply ignoring decisions that don’t favor their cause. And that position makes a travesty of the most fundamental principle of any kind of law: that it must apply equally to all parties in all cases, regardless of whether it helps or hurts a particular cause.

Thus, anyone who claims to support international law should be the first to denounce this abuse of U.N. decisions. And the fact that so many self-proclaimed advocates of international law instead lend tacit support to this travesty is precisely why no self-respecting person should accept their interpretation of anything.