

## Global Sumud Flotilla: Australia's Labor Must Condemn Israel's Aggression

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*For hours, families of activists on the Global Sumud Flotilla had no idea where their loved ones were. Phones went dead on April 30. Messages stopped. People simply vanished from contact at sea.*

That alone should concern us. But it also shows how control is exercised — not just through force, but by cutting communication and creating uncertainty.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted a civilian flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza, surrounding boats, cutting communications and boarding with armed personnel. On board were doctors, artists, aid workers and activists, including Australians.

The IDF released some activists in Crete. But what happened during the IDF's interception and detention cannot be brushed off or treated as a minor incident.

[There are reports](#) that the IDF used rubber bullets at point-blank range. They kicked others in the testicles and punched them in the ribs and face. Some activists required medical care after their release. Thiago Ávila from Brazil and Saif Abukeshek from Spain, have been taken to Israel for "questioning".

These are not small details. They go directly to the issue of human dignity. This was not an isolated event. It reflects a broader and ongoing reality for Palestinians.

For decades, Gaza has been subjected to an illegal blockade, including restrictions on the movement of people and goods. Access to food, medicine, clean water and healthcare remains extremely limited. Since 2023, Israel's war has dramatically worsened the privations.

In that context, civilian efforts to deliver aid are not symbolic; they are necessary.

[Intercepting a civilian flotilla](#) in international waters is considered by rights groups to be a violation of [international maritime law](#). At the very least, it raises serious legal questions, particularly when humanitarian aid is involved. Even where detention occurs, there are clear limits. Civilians must be treated with dignity. They must have access to medical care. They must not be cut off from communication.

Israel's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla and abduction of civilians demands an

explanation. The presence of Australian activists on board makes this a clear domestic issue. The Australian Labor government must not treat this as routine consular work or a minor administrative matter.

When citizens are detained and report injuries and mistreatment, silence is not enough. Silence is not neutral. It is a position.

Labor must condemn Israel's aggression in a public way, as [Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez](#) has done. It should condemn any mistreatment of its citizens, demand full transparency about what has taken place in international waters, ensure the safety and medical care of all Australians involved and support an independent international investigation into the interception and detention of civilians.

Australia should also take concrete diplomatic steps, including summoning the Israeli ambassador to explain what happened. Letting this pass without accountability sets a dangerous precedent. It signals that civilians can be treated as targets and that humanitarian action can be restricted without consequence.

The flotilla did not reach Gaza. But Israel's illegal action on international waters has brought news of the Global Sumud Flotilla much further.

This is no longer just about what happened at sea. It is also about which governments are prepared to defend their citizens who were on a mission to deliver humanitarian relief to Gaza.

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*Featured image: Jews against the Occupation '48 organised a solidarity action with the Global Sumud Flotilla at Coogee Beach on May 3. Photo: Peter Boyle*

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