Israel attacks third humanitarian Freedom/Sumud Flotilla bound for Gaza

Thomas Scripps
25 September 2025

The Global Sumud Flotilla carrying aid to Gaza is coming under relentless Israeli attack in flagrant violation of international law, ignored by the European powers.

Over 50 vessels from various organisations—the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, Global March to Gaza, and Thousand Madleens to Gaza—carrying 500 volunteers from 44 countries are currently off the coast of Crete. The main contingent launched from Barcelona on August 31, with more ships joining later from Bizerte in Tunisia and August in Sicily.

Their purpose is to draw attention to the illegal blockade of Gaza and the famine that is being perpetrated against the Palestinians by the Israeli government.

Two attacks in two days earlier this month saw incendiary devices dropped on two different boats—the *Family Boat* and the flagship *Alma*—while they were moored in Tunisia.

This week, the Flotilla reported, "Multiple drones, unidentified objects dropped, communications jammed and explosions heard from a number of boats. We are witnessing these psychological operations first-hand, right now, but we will not be intimidated."

Activist Yasemin Acar described having "sighted 15 to 16 drones". Thiago Avila described in a video how four boats had been "targeted with drones throwing devices", before an explosion can be heard in the background. He later added that boats had been sprayed with chemicals. The Flotilla's official account posted a video of an explosion recorded from the *Spectre*.

The Israeli government has refused to comment on the attacks while continuing to threaten the flotilla. On Tuesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed the boats were "pursuing a violent course of action" and that their mission was "organized by Hamas" and "intended to serve Hamas".

Two previous attempts to deliver aid by sea this year have been blocked by Israeli armed forces. In June, the *Madleen* was raided and its crew arrested and deported. In May, the *Conscience* was hit by drones off the coast of Malta and had to be rescued.

The fleet this time is much larger and is carrying multiple members of several European parliaments. There are four representatives from Italy: Democratic Party member of the Chamber of Deputies Arturo Scotto, M5S Italian Senator Marco Croatti, Greens and Left Alliance MEP Benedetta Scuderi, and Democratic Party MEP Annalisa Corrado.

Coming from Ireland are Sinn Féin MEP Lynn Boylan, Senator Chris Andrews, and People Before Profit TD Paul Murphy. French MEP Emma Fourreau of La France Insoumise and Portuguese Left Bloc parliamentarian Mariana Mortágua are also involved.

Such is the license given to the fascistic Netanyahu regime in Tel Aviv—above all by the Trump administration, which has made its antipathy to Europe overwhelmingly clear—that it is prepared to risk killing them.

Following the drone attacks, Italy and Spain are sending frigates to the flotilla, saying they are necessary to protect the lives of their citizens on board.

Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto issued the "strongest condemnation" of the attack and said a multi-purpose frigate Fasan, previously sailing north of Crete, was "already on route" towards the flotilla "for possible rescue operations." According to an Italian official this was mainly to help Italians on board, and "If needed, our frigate has a well-stocked infirmary" and would not involve military action.

Crosetto insisted that the author of the attack was unknown, referring to "at-the-moment-unidentified

perpetrators".

A second vessel to be sent was announced Thursday.

While formally condemning the drone attack, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni denounced the humanitarian mission as "gratuitous, dangerous and irresponsible", saying its purpose was to create problems for her government.

Meloni said instead of the flotilla being allowed to reach Gaza and deliver aid, it should hand over the aid in Cyprus to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem—to be delivered by them.

Speaking to reporters outside the UN General Assembly Wednesday, Meloni said "It is a proposal that seems to have the support of the Cypriot government, the Israeli government and, of course, the Italian government. We are awaiting a response from the flotilla."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced that a naval ship will shadow the flotilla on the final stretch of its journey. The citizens of the 45 nations participating in the aid mission had every right to sail in the Mediterranean unharmed, he said, also while attending the UN session, and that "Tomorrow we will dispatch a naval vessel from Cartagena with all necessary resources in case it was necessary to assist the flotilla and carry out a rescue operation."

Sanchez's intervention followed a speech Tuesday at the UN General Assembly by King Felipe calling on Israel to "stop the massacre" and end its "abhorrent acts" in Gaza. While speaking about the many war crimes of the Israel regime in Gaza, including "so many deaths among the civilian population", "the famine and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people", he refused to say this was a genocide.

The Italian and Spanish governments are being forced to take some form of visible action because of the growing opposition among workers, students and youth to Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The drone attacks Tuesday and Wednesday came just hours after tens of thousands of Italian workers and young people held protests Monday in up to 80 towns and cities against Israel's onslaught.

Ten days ago, over 100,000 protesters took to the streets in Madrid, blocking the final stage of Spanish Vuelta cycling race due to of the participation of the Israel–Premier Tech cycling team. Further anti-genocide protests were held across Spain on September 18.

Other European governments have said nothing. There are a 13 British nationals on the flotilla in total, and at least three boats sailing under the British flag, including two of those drone attacked on Tuesday night. But the Labour government in the UK, up to its neck in support of Israel's war crimes, has proposed no action in defence of its citizens.

European Union spokesperson Eva Hrncirova earlier this month declared, "We don't encourage flotillas like this, because basically they can escalate the situation, and they also put their participants at risk."

The "best way" to deliver aid was to work with the architects of the famine in Gaza, which was why "we keep the channels with Israel open, and we talk to Israeli authorities," she said.

The general silence in Europe over the drone attacks on the Sumud Flotilla is in marked contrast to the flurry of condemnations over drones sighted near Copenhagen and Oslo airports, causing their closure, on Monday. NATO powers lost no time in pointing to Russia as the culprit and condemning its alleged effort to "disrupt and create unrest" in the strongest possible terms.

More drone sightings on Wednesday and Thursday closed Aalborg airport, and affected others in Esbjerg, Sønderborg and Skrydstrup. Danish defence minister Troels Lund Poulsen said the country was considering invoking NATO's Article 4 for the first time in its history. Poulsen added that "In addition to Article 4, there are other things that can be done through NATO."

A joint EU meeting is being held Friday to discuss plans for a "drone wall", with defence commissioner Andrius Kubilius setting a timescale of "somewhere around a year".

Following earlier allegations of Russian trespasses into NATO airspace, France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Spain and Sweden have deployed additional fighter jets and pilots to the alliance's eastern flank and threatened everything up to the shooting down of Russian aircraft.