

EXCLUSIVE: NETANYAHU EXPLAINS VIDEO OF ISRAELI  
RAID June 12, 2010

**Yesterday, eleven days after Israeli commandoes raided in international waters a convoy of vessels bearing humanitarian aid for Gaza, an hour-long, unedited video of the raid (<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/11/unedited-video-of-israeli-raid-posted-online/?hp>) was posted online by Iara Lee, a Brazilian-American filmmaker who was shooting a documentary on the convoy's mission and was aboard the Turkish ship Mavi Marmara when the raid occurred. In an oped (<http://www.culturesofresistance.org/op-ed>) published by the San Francisco Chronicle on June 5, Ms. Lee claims that the Mavi Marmara had no guns or weapons of any kind, as confirmed by Turkish customs agents before it sailed; that the ship carried “hundreds of civilian passengers” bent on aiding Palestinians who have been suffering “under an illegal siege” maintained by Israel in what Amnesty International calls “a flagrant violation of international law”; and that Israeli “commandoes and navy soldiers shot and killed at least nine civilians and seriously injured dozens more.” In view of these tendentious allegations and the video itself, which appears to confirm them, I asked my good friend Benjamin Netanyahu for his comments on both. Bibi replied as follows:**

First of all, let me make one thing clear. Whenever it is attacked, Israel will defend itself, and that is exactly what it has done in this case. Many people in this world—including those who consider themselves good friends of Israel—can be deplorably naïve about what constitutes an “attack.” They think an attack requires things like guns, rockets, and stinger missiles.

And if they don't see any of those things on a ship, they fail to see how the ship can be "attacking" Israel. They don't realize that even a digital video camera can be a weapon just as deadly as a gun or missile—especially when the camera is deliberately aimed at an Israeli helicopter that is merely doing its job, shooting away in the middle of the night to defend the state of Israel against all those who would provoke it under the specious cover of "international law."

The video itself is an attack on Israel, a gross invasion of our privacy. To protect that privacy, we arrested everyone we found on board the Mavi Marmara, confiscated all of their video equipment, hard drives with video footage, cell phones, and notebooks. That Ms. Lee could smuggle her video out of Israel even as we generously released her is bad enough; that she posts it online for all to see is a flagrant affront to our dignity as well as our privacy.

But let us look closely at the video itself. What many people do not realize is that no unedited video can speak for itself—especially not this one. To an untrained eye, the video seems to show a shipful of unarmed civilians being gunned down by Israeli commandoes. But to a trained Israeli eye, the video shows something quite different.

Take for instance the bulky orange boxes that many of the passengers were wearing over their shoulders. To the untrained eye, these appear to be life jackets, and at one point, in fact, the video shows a large white chest on the deck of the ship labelled LIFE JACKETS 36 PCS. But Israeli eyes can see these would-be "life jackets" for what they truly are: suicide vests. Our own intelligence agents have confirmed to us that the men and women on the Mavi Marmara aimed to get as close as they could to Tel Aviv, jump in the water, detonate their vests, and thus generate a tidal wave that would overwhelm our beautiful city on the sea.

Furthermore, those who claim that the civilians on this ship had no weapons at all have obviously overlooked two kinds of weapons plainly visible in the video: broomsticks and slingshots. Though no one on the ship is actually shown using a broomstick against our heroic Israeli soldiers, the video does show something even more outrageous: as our heroic helicopter hovers gently, solicitously, and unprovocatively over the ship, two people—a man and a woman—are each plainly caught in the very act of shooting straight at it with rubber-banded wooden slingshots. The video does not show exactly what they were shooting, but as David once taught Goliath, even a small stone can do serious damage when fired with sufficient force. In fact, microscopic inspection of the helicopter after the raid has revealed at least four tiny dents in the tail section. The point is simply this: whenever one of our helicopters is fired upon—whether with a stinger missile or a wooden slingshot—Israeli has the right to defend itself with deadly force, even against so-called “innocent” civilians.

One thing more. The idea that we are collectively punishing all the people of Gaza is sheer nonsense. We have nothing against those people and would be happy to see them go anywhere they wish—off to Jordan, for instance—anytime they wish. We just cannot tolerate Hamas because they are a bunch of anti-semitic thugs whose murderous rockets have deliberately killed at least one Israeli civilian for every hundred or so Gazan civilians that we have killed accidentally. And even though Hamas legally won the right to govern Gaza, it did so only by suckering voters with social services like education and health care—services that the so-called “corrupt” party of al-Fatah quite rightly skimps on because unlike the Israelis, the Palestinians are notoriously pampered. By denying all aid to Gaza that does not come through our sensitive hands, we just want to make the people of Gaza see that Hamas can bring them nothing but misery and pain, that their political salvation lies with al-Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas, our

peace partner on the West Bank. Let's get one thing straight: we cannot and will not tolerate the existence of any government that refuses to recognize our right to exist, our right to occupy and rule just as much of Palestine as we want to claim. After all, since we are the chosen people, anything we choose to do must be right.

And one last thing about the video. The fact that only Israeli eyes can see what it truly reveals proves the folly of launching an international investigation of this unprovoked attack on Israel. Whether or not the evidence is visual or verbal, video or spoken testimony, no one but an Israeli can judge the evidence properly. That is why we are perfectly willing to investigate the incident ourselves, and thus to show how decently, honestly, and sensitively we have exercised the right to defend ourselves.