

334 BC

Macedonian army of Alexander the Great defeats Darius III of Persia in the Battle of the Granicus

1570

First atlas "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum" (Theatre of the World) is published by Abraham Ortelius in Antwerp with 70 maps

1843

First wagon train departs Independence, Missouri, for Oregon with 700 to 1,000 migrants



1939

Germany's Adolf Hitler and Italy's Benito Mussolini sign the "Pact of Steel" formalizing the 1936 alliance known as the Rome-Berlin Axis

Israel deports all foreign activists from Gaza flotilla

Israel deported hundreds of Gaza flotilla activists after mounting international criticism

● More than 430 activists involved

● Activists allege abuse in custody

● Several governments condemn treatment

AFP | Washington

Israel said yesterday it had deported all the foreign activists seized by Israeli forces from a Gaza-bound flotilla, following global outcry over their treatment in custody.

More than 430 activists from countries around the world had been placed in detention in Israel after they were intercepted at sea Monday while making the latest in a string of attempts to break the blockade of the Palestinian territory.

Israel's foreign ministry spokesman, Oren Marmorstein, said yesterday that "all foreign activists from the PR flotilla have been deported from Israel."

"Israel will not permit any breach of the lawful naval blockade on Gaza," he added.

The legal centre representing the activists said earlier yesterday that the majority of the flotilla members were "en route for deportation" from Ramon Airport in Israel's far south.

In a statement, Adalah added that the activists had been held at Israel's Ktziot prison, in the Negev Desert near Gaza.

Turkey had announced it was sending planes to Israel to "bring our citizens and participants from third countries to Turkey via special charter flights we will organise today".

Foreign ministry sources said



Israeli activist Zohar Chamberlain Regev (L) member of a flotilla bound for Gaza arrives at the Ashkelon Trial Court in Israel

"three flights" with a capacity for "more than 400 passengers" were being sent to Ramon airport.

A spokesman for Adalah said activists from Egypt had been transferred to Taba at Egypt's border with Israel, while those from Jordan had been transferred to Aqaba.

'Inflammatory video'

Around 50 vessels under the Global Sumud Flotilla set sail from Turkey last week in the latest attempt by activists to breach Israel's blockade of Gaza, after Israeli forces intercepted a previous convoy last month.

The deportations come after footage posted by Ben Gvir, captioned "Welcome to Israel" and showing the minister heckling and waving an Israeli flag among

the detained activists, sparked resounding condemnation by governments around the world, from Italy to Spain and Australia to Canada.

He was also criticised at home by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, as well as by US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee.

The United Kingdom announced it had summoned Israel's most senior diplomat in Britain following "the inflammatory video".

Francesca Albanese, an outspoken UN expert on the Palestinian territories, called on Italy, where she is from, to take action.

The treatment of the flotilla activists "is a luxury compared to what is inflicted on Palestinians in Israeli prisons," Albanese

wrote on X.

"Words do not suffice: let Italy stop opposing the suspension" of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, she added.

'They kicked us'

Adalah's legal director Suhad Bishara said Wednesday that the group's lawyers had been able to give legal counsel to "many" of the hundreds of activists, though she added that others had faced court hearings without legal assistance.

"We know of at least two participants who were hospitalised... both of them were shot by rubber bullets," Bishara said, adding that others said they feared they had broken ribs.

Alessandro Mantovani, an Italian journalist detained with the flotilla activists and deported be-

YOU

KNOW WHAT

Italian journalist Alessandro Mantovani revealed that security forces bound the detainees in handcuffs and foot chains, beating them while mockingly shouting "Welcome to Israel" before forcing them onto flights

fore the others, told reporters at Rome's Fiumicino airport yesterday that he and others had been "taken to Ben Gurion airport in handcuffs and with chains on our feet and put on a flight to Athens".

"They beat us up. They kicked us and punched us and shouted 'Welcome to Israel!'," he said of his treatment by Israeli security forces.

Israel controls all entry points into Gaza, under blockade since 2007.

Since the start of the Gaza war, sparked by Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, the territory has suffered severe shortages of food, medicine and other essential supplies, with Israel at times halting aid deliveries entirely.

A previous flotilla was intercepted last month in international waters off Greece, with most activists expelled to Europe.

Two were brought to Israel, detained for several days and then deported.

Italy and Spain urge EU sanctions on Israeli minister for activists' treatment

AFP | Rome

Italy and Spain have called on the EU to sanction Israel's far-right national security minister, who posted a video showing detained activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla forced to their knees with hands bound.

A global outcry erupted after Israeli minister Itamar Ben Gvir published a video Wednesday showing the heavy-handed treatment of foreign activists from the flotilla who were detained at sea by Israel and awaiting deportation at the southern port of Ashdod.

In the video, dozens of activists are seen forced to kneel with their foreheads to the ground and their hands tied.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called the treatment of the activists

"unacceptable".

Tajani wrote on X yesterday that he had requested sanctions against the minister for "seizing the activists in international waters and subjecting them to harassment and humiliation, in violation of the most basic human rights".

His comment came a day after Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called the activists' treatment "intolerable" and demanded an apology by Israel.

On Wednesday, Sanchez wrote on X the "images of Israeli Minister Ben Gvir humiliating members of the international flotilla in support of Gaza are unacceptable. We will not tolerate anyone mistreating our citizens".

In Ireland, a leaked letter revealed Prime Minister Micheal Martin urging the EU chief for "further action" against Israel



Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir (C) takes part in the Jerusalem Day parade at the Damascus Gate

over the activists' treatment.

In the letter to European Council President Antonio Costa that was leaked to AFP yesterday by an unnamed gov-

ernment source, Martin condemned Israel's "shocking treatment of EU citizens" and "unacceptable behaviour" by Ben Gvir.

The letter dated Wednesday called for a discussion about the matter at the next European Council meeting in June.

"At the very least, this must include the banning of products from Israeli settlements and the suspension of parts if not all of the EU's Association Agreement with Israel," Martin said.

That June 2000 agreement -- a treaty that sets a framework for cooperation -- includes a clause requiring respect for human rights.

Sanchez called sanctions against Ben Gvir a "matter of urgency" for Brussels, saying that he had already in September announced a ban on the minister entering Spain.

Also yesterday, the United Kingdom announced it had summoned Israel's most senior diplomat in Britain following "the inflammatory video".



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TWEETS

01



Appalled by the treatment of flotilla members by Israeli Minister Ben-Gvir. This behaviour is completely unacceptable. We call for their immediate release.

@eucopresident

02



Agriculture in India is the lifeline of life and an integral part of our culture. We are working not just to increase Production, but also to create a Farming Ecosystem that is Sustainable, Climate-Resilient, and Future-Ready.

@narendramodi

03



I met with Health Minister Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi to discuss the health situation in #Iran and how @WHO can support meeting the health needs across the country, following the impacts on health and damage sustained during recent hostilities in the country. Peace is the best medicine.

#WHA79

@DrTedros

04



Net migration has fallen 82%. I promised to restore control to our borders. My government is delivering. I know there's more to do, we're introducing a skills-based migration system that rewards contribution and ends our reliance on cheap overseas workers.

@Keir_Starmer

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