GLOBAL SUMUD FLOTILLA

PRESS RELEASE

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Global Sumud Flotilla Confirms Reports of Torture; Demands Immediate Global Intervention as israeli Vessel Transfers Abducted Civilians Toward Occupied Palestine

Eyewitness testimony confirms Saif Abukeshek subjected to torture aboard israeli military vessel as European authorities fail to prevent unlawful transfer

May 1, 2026

GREECE – The Global Sumud Flotilla is issuing an urgent international alert of a state-sponsored kidnapping and torture mission currently unfolding in international waters. This alert follows first-hand testimony from released participants confirming that Saif Abukeshek, one of two civilians forcibly taken by israeli forces, was subjected to torture while in detention aboard an israeli military vessel while still in Greek waters.

This constitutes a grave escalation and an additional war crime.

Following the illegal interception of 22 vessels belonging to the Global Sumud Flotilla by israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) in international waters less than 80 nautical miles west of the Greek island of Crete, 175 civilian participants were abducted from 21 boats and transferred to the israeli vessel *NAHSHON*, where they were subjected to physical and verbal violence.

Participant eyewitnesses provided harrowing testimony of Abukeshek's screams echoing throughout the ship as he was subjected to systematic torture, after being separated from the others.

The flotilla confirms that Saif Abukeshek, a Spanish and Swedish national with Palestinian origin, and Thiago Ávila,a Brazilian national, were not permitted to disembark when the vessel reached Ierapetra Port in southern Crete, despite being in Greek territorial waters. All other participants were eventually released, with 36 requiring hospital treatment due to injuries sustained during the violent interception and detention by the IOF.

Despite urgent legal interventions across multiple jurisdictions aimed at preventing the unlawful transfer of the two civilians, Greek authorities failed to act. The *NAHSHON* has now departed Greek territorial waters and is en route to occupied Palestine, where it is expected to arrive on May 2.

This represents a profound failure by European authorities to uphold international law and prevent the unlawful transfer of civilians to the custody of a military power credibly accused of ongoing war crimes.

This is not an isolated incident. This is the Gaza blockade extended to the Mediterranean: the same forces starving a population are now torturing the civilians who dare to bring them hope.

The Global Sumud Flotilla calls on global leaders, including European governments, Brazil, Spain, Sweden and Italy (the flag they were sailing under) to:

- Demand the immediate release of Saif Abukeshek and Thiago Ávila
- Publicly condemn the use of torture and unlawful detention of civilian humanitarian actors
- Intervene immediately to prevent their transfer into israeli custody
- Hold israel accountable for violations of international law, including torture, unlawful detention, and attacks on civilians in international waters
- Investigate the role of Greek authorities in enabling the departure of the vessel carrying the detained civilians

Time is critical.

The reported torture of a civilian activist, combined with the unlawful transfer of detainees from European waters, marks a dangerous escalation with far-reaching legal and moral consequences.

Failure to act now risks not only the safety and lives of Saif Abukeshek and Thiago Ávila, but further erodes the credibility of international law in the face of ongoing atrocities in Gaza.

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