



PRESS RELEASE

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israeli occupation Court Extends Detention of Saif Abukeshek and Thiago Ávila as Evidence of Torture They Suffered Emerges

Global Sumud Flotilla Calls for Urgent International Action

May 3, 2026 **Askalan, Occupied Palestine** –The Global Sumud Flotilla condemns the decision of the “Ashkelon Magistrates’ Court” to have Saif Abukeshek and Thiago Avila remanded in custody.

They were unlawfully abducted by israeli naval forces in international waters outside Greece and taken to occupied Palestine earlier this week.

The court has ordered their continued detention for 2 additional days until May 5.

Despite there being no formal charges levelled against them, israeli prosecutors have made sweeping politically motivated allegations in a retaliatory attempt to criminalize humanitarian action.

Attorneys from Adalah, Hadeel Abu Salih and Lubna Tuma, challenged the legality of the proceedings, underscoring that the israeli regime has no jurisdiction over foreign civilians seized in international waters. They further presented alarming testimony from both civilians detailing severe abuse, including beatings, prolonged physical restraint, blindfolding, and isolation at sea, treatment amounting to torture under international law.

Today's ruling reflects a broader pattern in which israeli occupation courts function to legitimize unlawful detention and state violence in cases involving Palestinians and their allies. Proceedings that rely on secret evidence and manufactured security concerns have long raised serious concerns among international legal experts about the absence of due process and the systemic use of the legal system to uphold policies that violate international law.

Both Ávila and Abukeshek have been returned to the Shikma detention facility in Askalan and remain on hunger strike in protest of their unlawful detention and mistreatment.

This case is not an isolated incident. It is part of a sustained attack on Palestinian life and on those who act in solidarity with it.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is a civilian humanitarian mission, operating fully within international law, seeking to break israel's unlawful siege on Gaza, a siege that has produced catastrophic humanitarian conditions and widespread starvation among Palestinians.

On April 29, Israeli forces launched a coordinated military operation against the flotilla in international waters, approximately 500 nautical miles from Gaza. Communications were jammed, drones deployed, and civilian vessels encircled and seized. Over 180 unarmed participants from dozens of countries were abducted. Aid destined for a besieged population was forcibly obstructed.

These actions constitute serious violations of international law, including:

- The Genocide Convention, which obligates all states to prevent genocide.
- The Fourth Geneva Convention, which protects civilians and mandates the facilitation of humanitarian aid.
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which guarantees freedom of navigation in international waters.
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which prohibits arbitrary detention and protects the right to life.
- Interfering with humanitarian aid in the context of Gaza, where starvation is being used as a weapon, is not a neutral act. It is part of a broader pattern of conduct that is considered to be war crimes and crimes against humanity according to experts.
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which protects humans from any intentional act to cause severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental.

CALL TO ACTION

The Global Sumud Flotilla calls on governments worldwide and specifically the Spanish, Swedish and Brazilian governments to act immediately and decisively:

- Demand the immediate and unconditional release of Saif Abukeshk, Thiago Ávila, Marwan Barghouti, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya and all Palestinian hostages.
- Provide urgent diplomatic protection to their detained nationals.
- Launch independent public investigations into the assault on civilian vessels in international waters.
- Impose meaningful economic sanctions to end ongoing violations of international law.
- Demand accountability for these and all crimes committed, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank.

We further call on parliamentarians and public officials globally to sign onto [a joint statement](#) demanding accountability and action.

As global inaction continues, civil resistance is escalating. Encampments will begin tomorrow, with major mobilizations planned across Europe, including coordinated encampments in Brussels starting Monday.

The participants of the Global Sumud Flotilla acted because the world has failed to stop the destruction of Palestinian life. Governments now face a clear choice: uphold international law or remain complicit in its destruction. In this spirit, we also turn to our friends in the Tunisian government, historically a steadfast beacon of support for the Palestinian struggle, to request the immediate release of our local organizers. We ask that

Tunisia remains true to its legacy of solidarity by ensuring that those who stand for Gaza are protected, not prosecuted, as we move together toward justice.

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