

1 [Freedom Flotilla and Gaza Blockade.]

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3 **Resolution joining the global community, including international human rights**
4 **organizations, The Elders, over 50 nations, and thousands of Bay Area residents in**
5 **condemning the Israeli Defense Forces' military attack on the Freedom Flotilla on May**
6 **31, 2010 that resulted in the death of at least nine people, including a United States**
7 **citizen; and urging President Barack Obama and Congress to continue their work**
8 **addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, actively seek an end to the blockade, and**
9 **work towards genuine peace and security for all peoples in the region.**
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12 WHEREAS, San Francisco is the birthplace of the United Nations (UN), an
13 international institution founded on the cooperation of all nations and dedicated toward lasting
14 world peace; and
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16 WHEREAS, San Francisco's legal status as a City of Refuge is based on the
17 recognition and understanding of our population's unique relationship to international
18 struggles and the overall principle that human life, whether here or abroad, has value and
19 dignity; and,
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21 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Bay Area is home to many people with ties to Israel
22 and Palestine; and,
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24 WHEREAS, People have a responsibility to speak out against oppression and
25 historically, the San Francisco Bay Area communities have been at the forefront of speaking

1 freely against injustice, taking part in humanitarian actions, and joining in solidarity with global
2 movements for peace and justice; and,

3 WHEREAS, Since June 2007, the Israeli government, maintaining the need to protect
4 its southern region against rocket attacks from Gaza, instituted a military blockade on
5 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated regions in the world; and,

6 WHEREAS, The blockade, carried out by Israel and Egypt, collectively deprives the
7 entire population of Gaza of adequate provisions of food, medicine and medical equipment,
8 fuel, building material, and other supplies necessary for basic necessities and free mobility
9 into and outside of the Gaza Strip; and,

10 WHEREAS, According to Amnesty International "rather than targeting armed groups,
11 the blockade mainly hits the most vulnerable, such as children, who make up more than half
12 of the population in Gaza, the elderly, the sick and the Gaza Strip's large refugee population;"
13 and,

14 WHEREAS, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) states that the
15 number of refugees living in abject poverty in the Gaza Strip has tripled since the blockade
16 began; and,

17 WHEREAS, The UNRWA further states that these families lack the means to purchase
18 even the most basic items, including soap, school materials, and clean drinking water and,
19 according to the UN, more than 60 percent of households are currently "food insecure;" and,

20 WHEREAS, on January 8, 2009, the United Nations Security Council at its 6063rd
21 meeting adopted Resolution 1860, on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File
22 No. , which is hereby declared to be a part of this resolution as if set forth fully herein,
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1 which emphasized “the need to ensure sustained and regular flow of goods and people
2 through the Gaza crossings” and “calls for the unimpeded provision and distribution
3 throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment”
4 and “welcomes the initiatives aimed at creating and opening humanitarian corridors and other
5 mechanisms for the sustained delivery of humanitarian aid;” and,

6 WHEREAS, John Ging, the Director of the UNRWA Operations in Gaza in an interview
7 with Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, called on the international community to take
8 responsibility of the blockade and pursue “practical ways to break the siege” and Director
9 Ging urged the world to send ships to the shores of Gaza, stating “We believe that Israel will
10 not intercept these vessels because the sea is open, and human rights organizations have
11 been successful in similar previous operations proving that breaking the siege of Gaza is
12 possible;” and,

14 WHEREAS, The international human rights community headed by the Free Gaza
15 Movement and The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief
16 (IHH), a Turkish nongovernment organization, organized the Freedom Flotilla consisting of six
17 ships, including the MV *Mavi Marmara*, in an attempt to bring much needed aid to Gaza and
18 provide pressure to break the blockade; and,

20 WHEREAS, The Freedom Flotilla carried approximately 800 international civilians from
21 40 different countries, five of whom were San Francisco Bay Area residents, representing all
22 ages, genders, and religions. Notable people aboard the flotilla included an elected member
23 of the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset Haneen Zoubi; internationally renowned Swedish
24 novelist Henning Mankell; a number of parliamentarians from European and Arab national
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1 legislatures; Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mairead Corrigan; and former UN Assistant
2 Secretary-General Denis Halliday, who were aboard the MV *Rachel Corrie*; and,

3 WHEREAS, The Freedom Flotilla is the ninth vessel voyage of its kind to make its way
4 to the blockaded Gaza Strip since 2008; and,

5 WHEREAS, The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) operating from warships and attack
6 helicopters in the vicinity forcibly boarded the Freedom Flotilla in international waters on May
7 31, 2010, resulting in the loss of at least nine lives and injuries to over 50 other civilians; and,

8 WHEREAS, International law prohibits the interdiction of vessels in international waters
9 and a violation of this may be considered an act of war; and,

10 WHEREAS, On Friday, June 4, 2010, *The Guardian* (UK) reported nine Turkish men
11 aboard the MV *Mavi Marmara* were shot a total of 30 times and five were killed by gunshot
12 wounds to the head, according to Dr. Haluk Ince the vice-chairman of the Turkish Council of
13 Forensic Medicine, which carried out the autopsies for the Turkish Ministry of Justice, and
14 among those killed was a 19 year old United States citizen;" and,

15 WHEREAS, Members of the Freedom Flotilla included five San Francisco Bay Area
16 activists, Iara Lee, a filmmaker from San Francisco; Katherine Ellipt Sheetz, a registered
17 nurse from Richmond; Gene St. Onge, a civil engineer, and Janet Kobren, a retired school
18 teacher, both of Oakland; and Paul Larudee of Richmond, co-founder of the Free Palestine
19 Movement who told the *Associated Press* that he was beaten six times by the Israeli Defense
20 Forces, receiving multiple bruises and a black eye; and,

21 WHEREAS, The Elders, a group started in 2007 by Nelson Mandela including six
22 Nobel peace prize winners, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, former Finnish
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1 President Martti Ahtisaari, former US President Jimmy Carter, detained Burmese leader Aung
2 San Suu Kyi, and former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, released a statement condemning the
3 attacks as “completely inexcusable” further stating, “this tragic incident should draw the
4 world’s attention to the terrible suffering of Gaza’s 1.5 million people, half of whom are
5 children under the age of 18,” and describing the treatment of the people of Gaza as “one of
6 the world’s greatest human rights violations” and that the blockade is not only “illegal, it is
7 counterproductive” because it empowers extremists in the Palestinian territories; and,
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9 WHEREAS, In a statement by the President of the United Nations Security Council, on
10 file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. , which is hereby declared to be a
11 part of this resolution as if set forth fully herein, released after the attack on the Freedom
12 Flotilla, he “stresses that the situation in Gaza is not sustainable... In that context, it reiterates
13 its grave concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and stressed the need for sustained
14 and regular flow of goods and people to Gaza as well as unimpeded provision and distribution
15 of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza;” and,
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17 WHEREAS, The Israeli government has attempted to control the information about the
18 IDF attack on the Freedom Flotilla in such a way that a thorough and accurate accounting is
19 extremely difficult; and,

20 WHEREAS, The IDF’s claims that they were the victims of an attack even though it
21 was the IDF who forcibly boarded the Flotilla ships from attack helicopters and warships in
22 international waters at 4:30 a.m.; and,
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24 WHEREAS, The United Nations Security Council has also referenced the IDF’s
25 handling of the media surrounding the event as follows: “Given that those who had been on-

1 board the ships were now in Israeli custody, including reporters who were travelling with the
2 convoy, and had had their transmission equipment confiscated by the boarding Israeli forces,
3 further information from the organizers of the convoy had been minimal since this morning.

4 We have no independent information on what transpired;" and,

5 WHEREAS, As reported on *Democracy Now* on June 4, 2010, the Israel Defense
6 Forces issued a press release two days after the assault saying that approximately forty flotilla
7 passengers "are mercenaries belonging to the Al Qaeda terror organization;" and,

8 WHEREAS, Despite inquiries by independent journalist Max Blumenthal and other
9 press colleagues to the Israeli military press office to substantiate these claims, no evidence
10 was provided to back up these statements and the IDF has since modified their original
11 headline "Attackers of the IDF Soldiers Found to be Al Qaeda Mercenaries" to "Attackers of
12 the IDF Soldiers Found Without Identification Papers;" and,

13 WHEREAS, United States Senator Dianne Feinstein, Chair of the Senate Intelligence
14 Committee, has called for an impartial inquiry on the Israeli raid on the Freedom Flotilla and
15 the easing of the Gaza blockade; and,

16 WHEREAS, At least 50 countries have officially condemned or protested Israel's
17 actions against the Freedom Flotilla; several countries, including South Africa, Ecuador,
18 Nicaragua, and Turkey, have recalled their Ambassadors in protest; and international
19 organizations, including the UN Human Rights Commission and the European Union, have
20 condemned Israel's attack; and,

1 WHEREAS, On June 7, 2010, Egypt announced that it would leave its border with
2 Gaza open for humanitarian aid and restricted travel, thus ending Egypt's part in the blockade
3 of Gaza; and

4 WHEREAS, 50 members of Congress have signed a letter authored by Congressman
5 Keith Ellison, on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. , which is hereby
6 declared to be a part of this resolution as if set forth fully herein, to President Obama
7 expressing concern about the conditions in Gaza and urging his leadership in addressing the
8 situation; now, therefore, be it
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10 RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco denounces all forms of
11 violence against civilians and encourages nonviolent solutions to humanitarian crises in the
12 aforementioned region, and globally; and urges all San Francisco residents to engage in full
13 and open communication and education about this issue; and therefore

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco hereby joins the
15 global community including international human rights organizations, The Elders, over 50
16 nations, and thousands of Bay Area residents in condemning the Israeli Defense Forces'
17 military attack on the Freedom Flotilla on May 31, 2010 that resulted in the death of at least
18 nine people including a United States citizen; and, be it
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20 FURTHER RESOLVED, The City and County of San Francisco expresses our
21 condolences for families of those killed in the raid on the Flotilla and wishes a speedy
22 recovery for those injured; and, be it
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24 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco urges President
25 Barack Obama and Congress to strengthen their ongoing diplomatic efforts to create lasting

1 peace in the region and call for an independent investigation into the events surrounding the
2 raid on the Freedom Flotilla and, in particular, into the raid itself, the use of force and rules of
3 engagement by the Israeli Defense Forces; and, be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco urges President
5 Barack Obama and Congress to continue their work addressing the humanitarian crisis in
6 Gaza, actively seek an end to the blockade, and work towards genuine peace and security for
7 all peoples in the region.
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