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Gaza flotilla attack: activist releases new footage

Documentary maker Iara Lee smuggles out video despite Israeli attempt to confiscate all recordings

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New footage has emerged of the Israeli assault on a convoy of aid ships headed to Gaza in which nine activists were killed.

The high-quality film was reportedly recorded by New York-based documentary maker Iara Lee aboard the Mavi Marmara, the Turkish ship that bore the brunt of the Israeli attacks.

Israel attempted to confiscate all footage recorded by participants in the Gaza Freedom flotilla – including taking away mobile phones – but Lee managed to smuggle one hour of video out of the country by hiding it in her underwear, it was reported.

The 15 minutes of film posted online shows the moments leading up to and during the Israeli commandos' assault on the Mavi Marmara.

At one stage, the captain of the boat can be heard over the public address system saying: "Do not show resistance ... They are using live ammunition ... Be calm, be very calm." Gunshots can be heard.

The film includes footage of an Israeli inflatable boat carrying commandos, and troops can be seen rappelling from a helicopter on to the Mavi Marmara. While they do so, two men on the Marmara can be seen using catapults aimed at the soldiers, who are high above them, although the projectiles they are firing cannot be ascertained.

At one point, a passenger on the boat says to the camera: "[The activists] hold two soldiers down here, bleeding and wounded." One soldier can be seen being carried down the stairs of the vessel. In an interview with Democracy Now, Lee said the soldiers were injured in the commotion. "They got treatment by our passengers," she said.

A number of passengers are shown in the video receiving medical treatment for wounds, including one man being resuscitated. He does not appear to respond. At the end of the footage a woman can be heard shouting: "We have no guns here, we are civilians taking care of injured people. Don't use violence, we need help."

Lee described the attack as terrifying. "[The Israelis] came to kill," she said. "They wanted to take over the ship."

More than 600 pro-Palestinian activists were detained by Israel in the 31 May raids on the aid convoy. There was global condemnation of the assault but Israel claimed its troops acted in self-defence after coming under attack from members of an "extremist" Turkish group.

It announced on Monday it would conduct an internal investigation into the incident, defying pressure for a thorough international inquiry.

The UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions said any inquiry set up by Israel should include "all video and other records of the incident, including those confiscated from civilians". Philip Alston said it must be able to interview all key witnesses, including military personnel.

"Any inquiry set up by Israel to investigate the Gaza flotilla incident must be given a genuine capacity to find the facts. Without that capacity an inquiry will simply not be considered credible."

Alston said the inquiry must be independent of government, have full legal authority to investigate and make its final report open to the public.

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