

**Canadian Friends of Peace Now
Shalom Achshav Peace Foundation**

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NEWS

PEACE NOW WELCOMES FLOTILLA INQUIRY, URGES END OF GAZA SIEGE

TORONTO—[June 14, 2010]

Canadian Friends of Peace Now today cautiously welcomed the Israeli Government's calling of an independent public inquiry into the tragic flotilla incident, but urged the Netanyahu Government to lift the siege of Gaza without delay.

Israel has a proud tradition of impartial, jurist-led commissions probing failures of policy and abuses of authority, notably the Kahan Commission's report on the Sabra and Shatilla massacres in 1982 and the Winograd commission's report on the 2006 war on Hezbollah.

It is encouraging that this latest panel will include Northern Ireland's Nobel peace laureate David Trimble and Canada's former Judge Advocat General Ken Watkin. It is, however, a sad commentary on the decline of Israel's stature in the world that foreign observers were needed to bolster the credibility of the inquiry.

Predictably, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority dismissed anything less than a UN inquiry. There are, admittedly, legitimate concerns that the foreign participants won't be able to vote in relation to the proceedings and conclusions of the inquiry. But they are unlikely to have accepted a "window dressing" role. There are also concerns about the terms of reference. But those terms should not be faulted for failing to address the entirety of the Gaza blockade.

It doesn't require a public inquiry to determine that the Gaza siege is a failed policy—indeed, a disastrous policy. Disastrous for the Gaza Palestinians, who are collectively punished for the crimes of Hamas--and disastrous for Israel, which could have avoided the 2008-09 Gaza War by lifting the siege as part of a broadened ceasefire with Hamas.

The blockade has to be addressed with more urgency than a public inquiry can provide. What is needed is a new Israeli strategy -- and a new security regime -- devised and implemented in coordination with the Obama Administration, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, and the E.U. The goal should be to keep weapons out of Gaza and allow all civilian goods in. It's time to replace the blockade, not to offer cosmetic improvements.