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Turkish Navy Will Escort Gaza-Bound Aid Ships

By John Glaser

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<u>The Turkish navy will</u> significantly increase its presence in the eastern Mediterranean and plans to escort civilian ships carrying aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as part of a "more aggressive strategy" following the release of the UN Palmer report on the 2010 Gaza flotilla.



"The eastern Mediterranean will no longer be a place where Israeli naval forces can freely exercise their bullying practices against civilian vessels," a Turkish official was quoted as saying.

The announcement comes after the <u>leaking of the UN report on the Mavi Marmara flotilla killings</u>. The report characterized Israel's <u>killing of aid workers as "excessive and unreasonable."</u> Still, Tel Aviv refused to apologize for the incident, maintaining that killing civilians aboard a ship filled with humanitarian supplies headed for suffering Gazans was an act of self defense.

In response, the Turkish government <u>expelled Israel's ambassador</u> and is considering legal action against the Israeli soldiers and all officials involved in the attack. In the event of another aid ship headed for Gaza, the Israeli navy will be less apt to raid the vessel if the Turkish navy is there to protect it.