

## PRESS RELEASE

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## US Built, US-Funded: The Role the United States Played in the Torture and Kidnapping of Humanitarians

**May 26, 2026** **ISTANBUL** — As testimonies from the 428 participants illegally kidnapped by the Israeli regime continue to surface, the United States' critical role in the abuses and torture of humanitarian volunteers and journalists has become undeniable. This role goes beyond the State Department's diplomatic shielding and the US Embassy's refusal to assist American families seeking information; it includes the very ship on which volunteer participants were illegally detained and tortured; and the weapons used to inflict life-threatening trauma against them.

### **The US-Funded "Torture Boat"**

The vessel at the center of many severe abuses, including systematic torture and sexual assault, was a converted naval landing craft that participants have come to call "the torture boat". The vessel is the *INS Nahshon*, built by Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding (a subsidiary of Bollinger Shipyards) and fully financed under the US Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. Delivered to the occupation navy in 2023, this ship was used as a floating prison during the illegal April 29 and 30 interceptions off the coast of Crete, where at least 30 participants were injured severely enough that they had to be taken to the hospital.

### **Brutality Inside "The Beating Container"**

During the vessel's deployment, detained humanitarians, doctors, and journalists were processed one by one through a darkened shipping container. Inside, groups of three to five soldiers systematically brutalized each person who came through the door while those waiting outside listened to the screams.

"All of a sudden I hear, 'Welcome to Israel!' And I start getting hit, like first hit on the head, second hit in the ribs, then I fall, then they kick me," recounted participant Yassine Benjelloun, who was also tased multiple times. "What lasts maybe three or five minutes seems like a lifetime. You don't know that the door is going to open, and they're going to kick you out."

Megan Marie Dominguez, a US participant, was thrown into the beating container, struck with sufficient force to render her nearly unconscious, then passed to a second set of soldiers armed with tasers and what she describes as "other toys to beat people up with."

Dr. Jihan, a Malaysian physician on board, described a medical situation with no analogue in her professional experience. She documented:

- 35 participants with fractures, including broken ribs, shoulder dislocations, and humerus fractures.
- Severe head injuries, concussions, and eye/ear trauma.
- At least two individuals forcibly injected with unidentified substances that left them drowsy and disoriented.
- 14 cases of sexual assault, as well as the systematic, deliberate removal of Muslim women's hijabs.

"Being a doctor, the main aim is to reduce the sufferings of people," said Dr. Jihan. "But when we cannot do anything to help them, it was the worst and the most horrible feeling that I have. It was so devastating."

### **American Munitions Used Against Civilians**

The weapons deployed on board were also American-made. Stun grenades and metal-bearing projectile rounds were identified by manufacturer markings as products of Combined Tactical Systems (CTS), a brand of the Jamestown, Pennsylvania-based weapons manufacturer Combined Systems Inc. (CSI). These weapons were fired at close range in enclosed spaces against participants who were sitting down or trying to sleep, a direct violation of the manufacturer's own usage guidelines.

### **A Structural Policy of Complicity**

The weapons. The ship. The diplomatic silence. None of this was accidental. Former State Department official Josh Paul, who resigned in protest over US arms transfers to Israel, is unequivocal:

"Under U.S. law, arms transfers must only be made for purposes authorized by law. INS Nahshon's use by Israel to conduct an illegal seizure in international waters, and then to act as a base for the torture and sexual assault of foreign civilians, including Americans, who had broken no laws, and were acting from conscience to serve an urgent humanitarian need, plainly and grievously violates those terms. When this sale was authorized, U.S. officials will have asked themselves how Israel might use this platform. The basis on which they should have denied this transfer has been there since at least the Mavi Marmara incident in 2011, but is now more clear than ever, and the lesson here is a simple one: that anything we transfer to Israel, Israel will find a way to misuse - whether it is a bomb, a bulldozer, or a boat."

This is not an isolated incident or the failure of a single administration; it is a structural, bipartisan commitment by the United States government to prioritize its strategic relations above the protection of its own citizens and its own laws. By utilizing a separately constructed, "broken" vetting process, the State Department routinely circumvents the 1997 Leahy Law, which strictly prohibits US military assistance to foreign units credibly accused of gross human rights violations like torture and rape.

While international law has been flagrantly violated and legal proceedings are now active in Turkey, Italy, and Spain, with Italian prosecutors opening an investigation into kidnapping and sexual assault, the US government continues to look away.

### **Demands to the United States Government**

The Israeli regime continues to commit genocide using US-built ships and US-made weapons. The torture of US citizens and humanitarian volunteers with American-made tools is not an anomaly. It is the direct outcome of unconditional US support for a regime continuously committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. What GSF participants survived for days, many Palestinians endure indefinitely without lawyers or consular access.

The Global Sumud Flotilla calls on the United States Government to take immediate action:

1. Open immediate hearings into the deployment of FMF-funded military assets, including INS Nahshon, against US citizens.
2. Suspend all arms transfers to the Israeli regime pending that investigation.
3. Enforce the Leahy Law without exemption or special processes for the regime.
4. Provide a full accounting of every consular and distress request filed by families of detained participants that was dismissed or ignored.
5. Investigate the use of CTS munitions, produced under DOD contracts, against unarmed civilian humanitarians.
6. End unconditional military and diplomatic support for a regime committing genocide.

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