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Identical letters dated 19 May 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to draw your attention to an issue of concern to my Government.

On 16 May 2011, at approximately 5.50 a.m. local time, a Malaysian-owned ship named the *MV Finch*, sailing under the Moldovan flag, made an attempt to challenge Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip. This initiative was sponsored by the Perdana Global Peace Foundation (PGPF), an organization that has participated in previous provocative attempts to violate Israel's naval blockade, including the flotilla incident of May 2010.

According to reports posted on the PGPF's website, the *MV Finch* left the Port of Piraeus in Greece on 11 May 2011, carrying some 12 individuals of different nationalities. The ship allegedly carried some 7.5 kilometres of sewage pipes, which the initiative's organizers stated that they sought to deliver to the Gaza Strip in breach of the naval blockade in the area.

After those in command of the ship stated their intention to violate the naval blockade of the Gaza Strip — and refused to shift their course following requests from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) — the IDF was compelled to enforce the naval blockade. Following this action, the *MV Finch* was re-routed to the Port of El Arish in Egypt.

These kinds of actions are particularly troubling in light of the present turmoil in the Middle East. Extremists continue to seek out provocations in our region by land and by sea, posing a threat to peace and stability.

It is clear that this provocation was designed to serve a political agenda and not to advance a humanitarian goal. As is widely known, there are established mechanisms and appropriate channels through which humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the Gaza Strip, including through Israel. Israel has stated its willingness to process humanitarian goods in the Port of Ashdod and to transfer them, subject to security inspection, to the Gaza Strip. The United Nations and other international actors use such mechanisms on a daily basis to transfer various goods, including those directly related to sewage and the treatment of water.

Many international leaders, including representatives of the United Nations, have spoken out against provocative maritime actions that violate Israel's naval blockade, emphasizing the need for humanitarian supplies to be transferred only



through established channels to the Gaza Strip. A large number of Security Council members expressed this view during the Council's last debate on the Middle East, on 21 April 2011. During this debate, H.E. Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said, "the appropriate way to meet needs in Gaza is through legitimate crossings".

As we have written in past letters — and as Israel has repeatedly made clear — the maritime area west of the Gaza Strip is considered an area of hostilities, and a naval blockade — which Israel officially declared on 3 January 2009 — remains in effect in that zone. Accordingly, all vessels, including civilian vessels, are strictly prohibited from entering the blockaded area.

The international community should send an unambiguous message to the organizers of these provocations that such initiatives only serve to raise tensions in our region, stressing that the appropriate means for transferring humanitarian goods to the Gaza Strip is through established channels. In addition, we expect all countries to effectively caution their citizens about the risks associated with participating in such harmful provocations.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haim **Waxman**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
