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Ressort: Special interest

Activism as Geopolitical Strategy

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For over a decade, Zahir Birawi has been the driving force behind Gaza-bound flotillas—campaigns that present themselves as humanitarian missions but serve a distinctly political purpose. The Hamas-affiliated activist rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood and operating from London has a different aim.

Zahir Birawi is a Palestinian-British activist who has positioned himself at the intersection of European civil society and Islamist political strategy. Based in London, he uses his location to build networks, mobilize international activists, and legitimize Hamas-linked initiatives under the guise of humanitarian solidarity.

Birawi orchestrates operations designed not to deliver aid, but to isolate Israel and amplify Hamas propaganda on the global stage.

He played a central role in organizing the 2010 Mavi Marmara flotilla, which attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade and resulted in a deadly confrontation.

He is a founding member of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, which continues to launch Gaza-bound flotillas.

Birawi has been linked to the EuroPal Forum, a London-based organization designated by Israeli authorities as a terrorist front.

His campaigns are not about humanitarian relief—they are strategic media operations aimed at delegitimizing Israel and promoting Hamas narratives. The Network: From London to Hamas Leadership: Birawi's operations are tightly connected to Hamas leadership. His London base serves as a hub for coordination, fundraising, and outreach to Western activists and NGOs. The Sumud Flotilla, which claims independence, is in fact deeply embedded in Hamas's infrastructure.

Ismail Haniyeh, the former head of Hamas (eliminated in 2024), maintained direct ties with Birawi.

Youssef Hamdan, Hamas's North African chief, personally hosted Marwan Ben Gwetaya, a spokesperson for the Sumud Flotilla.

Hamdan also appeared publicly with Wael Nawar, another Sumud spokesman listed on the flotilla's official site.

From the planner (Birawi in London) to the hosts (Hamdan) and the public faces (Ben Gwetaya and Nawar), the flotilla network is clearly coordinated and ideologically unified. It is not independent—it is a Hamas operation.

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In June 2025, Greta Thunberg joined the “Madleen” flotilla, organized by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition. Her participation brought global media attention and moral weight to the campaign. She delivered a speech in Sicily before the boat set sail and was later detained by Israeli forces.

Though Thunberg has no direct ties to Hamas, critics argue that her involvement lent legitimacy to a campaign orchestrated by Hamas-linked figures. Her presence illustrates how Western activists can be drawn into complex geopolitical conflicts—often without full awareness of the ideological machinery behind them.

Qatar is the quiet enabler.

Qatar plays a nuanced role in the flotilla ecosystem:

Financial Support: Qatar regularly sends funds to Gaza—sometimes coordinated with Israel, sometimes directly to Hamas-linked entities.

Political Shelter: Senior Hamas leaders, including Haniyeh, have long been based in Doha.

Media Influence: Through outlets like Al Jazeera, Qatar promotes a pro-Palestinian narrative that resonates with Western activist movements.

While Qatar’s direct involvement in flotilla logistics remains unclear, its ideological alignment, financial backing, and media infrastructure suggest a supportive role behind the scenes.

It is a Hamas Flotilla in all but name.

These flotillas are not isolated humanitarian efforts. They are part of a carefully constructed network:

Zahir Birawi, operating from London, provides the strategy and international reach.

Greta Thunberg adds moral legitimacy and media visibility.

Qatar supplies funding, protection, and narrative control.

The Sumud Flotilla, despite its claims of independence, is deeply embedded in Hamas’s operational web.

What appears to be a humanitarian voyage is, in reality, a geopolitical instrument—designed to shift public opinion, isolate Israel, and empower Hamas’s global messaging.

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