

Israel furious over Red Cross interview with Turkish NGO

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Israel has condemned the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for interviewing the deputy chairman of a Turkish welfare organisation. Hussein Oruc's NGO, known by its acronym IHH, took part in the Freedom Flotilla in 2010 which was intercepted by Israeli commandos in international waters en route to the Gaza Strip. Nine Turkish citizens were killed in the raid.

Israel is reported to be furious that the ICRC asked Oruc to take part in a video clip produced to mark the 150th anniversary of the international organisation. Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor told the Times of Israel, "By dignifying the IHH with ICRC publication, the Red Cross has demonstrated an incredible lack of discernment. ICRC will realise that they made a terrible mistake and will want to retract this."

In the clip posted on YouTube, Oruc said, "My responsibility is not only giving something to the people, but also I need to show the problem to the others." He said that his main mission was to send relief to Gaza via the Freedom Flotilla while also showing to the world that there the territory was under siege.

Palmor referred to an interview with Oruc in 2011. Commenting on the Israeli attack on the flotilla the IHH official proclaimed at that time, "Now the Israelis are showing their real face. They are not acting only against the Muslims, not only against the Turks; they are acting against everybody. And they want to control the West."

According to Palmor, those comments were "beyond bizarre". This is not plain old anti-Semitism, he insisted; "the fact that this has been dignified by the ICRC is mindboggling".

The Times of Israel contacted the ICRC, whose spokesman said: "These interviews, linked to the 150th anniversary of the ICRC, are part of an initiative to highlight different perspectives on current humanitarian challenges."