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Backgrounder: International Solidarity Movement

Introduction

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The International Solidarity Movement (ISM), founded in 2001, is a well-organized movement that seeks to delegitimize Israel by spreading anti-Israel propaganda and misinformation and recruiting activists to participate in its initiatives overseas.

Since its inception, hundreds of ISM volunteers have traveled to Israel to protest Israel's military operations in the Palestinian territories. Many of these volunteers engage in confrontational tactics such as obstructing the activities of the Israeli military. These operations not only put Israeli troops in danger, but also risk the lives of ISM volunteers and the lives of the Palestinians they ostensibly want to protect.

ISM's ideology centers on the notion that direct action is the most effective means of opposing Israel's treatment of Palestinians, which ISM likens to apartheid, internment, and ethnic cleansing. "The Israeli army and apartheid in Palestine," the group declares on its web site, "can be defeated by strategic disciplined unarmed resistance."

Though ISM claims to promote only nonviolent means of resistance, it voices support for others who engage in armed resistance against Israel. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has even warned that its activity "at times" is "under the auspices of Palestinian terrorist organizations."

ISM also calls for heightened media scrutiny of Israel's relationship with the U.S., and demands that the U.S. be held accountable for what it describes as Israel's "illegal and unjust actions." In a January 2010 article, for example, co-founder Adam Shapiro accused AIPAC of "dictating" American foreign policy and asserted that "the consistent lack of US credibility in the world... is a consequence of our relationship with Israel and the exceptionalism applied to an occupier nation foisting apartheid on the Palestinians."

The group's most ambitious campaign is the [Free Gaza Movement \(FGM\)](#), which was launched by several ISM leaders in 2007. By organizing FGM's high profile boat missions to Gaza, ISM has garnered some international support and widespread media attention. FGM's May 2010 flotilla, organized in conjunction with [Insani Yardim Vakfi \(IHH\)](#), a pro-Hamas Turkish group, was marked by a violent and deadly clash between the Israeli Navy and passengers aboard one of the six ships.

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