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CAPITOL HILL CITIZEN

*“Democracy
dies in
broad daylight”*

We are all Gaza

Citizen reporter on the flotilla

A first person account of trying
to deliver food to a starving people

By Tor Stumo

The Global Sumud Flotilla sounded the alarm 80 miles out from Gaza. A large fleet of ships had appeared on the radar and was closing in fast. It had to be the Israelis. We knew that it was their last chance to intercept us under cover of night – we’d been planning and drilling this scenario for weeks – but were still caught a bit flatfooted.

It was only 8 pm and the last dregs of sunset had just disappeared behind the horizon. I started to rush. The crew and I had been preparing the vessel for interception for the past two days, but I still needed to make some last-minute personal preparations. I sent two videos and a photo to my partner, to be posted if the Israelis abducted and imprisoned us. One show-

ing my face clearly next to my US passport.

One declaring that I had been illegally abducted by the Israeli Navy; that they had committed the war crime of stealing humanitarian aid on the way to a starving population. And finally, the declaration of a hunger strike in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. We had no intention of accepting food from the same entity that was starving millions.

I pressed send and ran upstairs past our GSF organizer, Rana. She grabbed my arm and asked if – just in case – I had finished writing my will? My jaw dropped. No one had ever mentioned a will. But we had drilled for drone bombings and abandoning sinking ships. Clearly, I should have thought of this. Laughing at the absurdity of the situation, I briefly



considered whether my meager savings merited any sort of deliberate division. Probably not. My attention turned back to the last of the interception preparations for the vessel.

When the first ship arrived, everything happened all at once. Internet gone. Radio gone. GPS gone. The crew and participants acted immediately, the way we’d been trained to for over a month. Dump anything the Israelis could call a weapon.

Kitchen knives, hammers, screwdrivers – even forks – were all in a bag, ready to be thrown. Go to the main cabin. Grab your life jacket. Go to your position on the aft deck.

Stay alert. The Israeli ship came closer. An errant thought came to me – no navigation lights? That’s a maritime violation! As if they heard me, a floodlight swept over our vessel, blinding us. A loudspeaker blared, “Stop the boat and turn off your engines!” We had no intention of complying with piracy, and continued at a slow speed.

Moments later, soldiers from a speedboat stormed aboard, assault rifles and laser sights pointed at us. One grabbed our captain, Fatih, forcing him to drive at gunpoint towards Ashdod Port. The rest of us were searched one-by-one on the bow

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The Pentagon’s black budget

Why Congress
doesn’t audit
the war machine

By Ellen Brown

The U.S. federal debt has passed \$38 trillion and is growing at a record pace—\$1 trillion in just over two months, the fastest accumulation outside the pandemic era. Interest payments now exceed \$1.16 trillion annually, second only to Social Security.

Military spending follows close behind, with the Pentagon’s FY 2025 budget reaching \$852.2 billion – a 3.3% increase over the previous year.

The Department of Defense, now secondarily referred to as the Department of War, consumes nearly half of the discretionary budget – more than all other departments combined.

Its spending dwarfs that of China (\$296 billion), Russia (\$84 billion), and the next eight nations combined.

Managing \$4.1 trillion in assets and \$4.3 trillion in liabilities, the Pentagon oversees a global military empire spanning over 4,790 sites. Yet it operates with minimal congressional oversight.

Under the Constitution, the military budget should not be paid at all, because the Penta-

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Congress is there for the taking. Now’s the time to take it

By Ralph Nader

A government responsive to the people requires, under our Constitution, a just Congress responsive to the necessities of the people. Congress is the primary branch of government – not a co-equal branch as it is routinely described. It possesses the exclusive authority to tax, spend, enact programs,

declare war, confirm nominees, fire (impeach) officials in the executive and judicial branches, investigate and regulate the other branches of government, and empower the people to defend, protect and prosper.

The reality, however, is that collectively, with few exceptions, the people have abandoned their constitutional champion to the intricate grip of an ever smaller number of gi-

ant corporations and their trade associations, a corporate state loaded with lobbyists and campaign money.

America’s greatest labor leader, Eugene Debs, in the twilight of his career in the 1920s, was asked by a reporter what was his most serious regret. Debs reportedly replied – “The American people can have almost anything they want under the Constitution, but it seems

they do not want much of anything at all.”

How prescient! Except for a brief period in the 1930s and 1960s and early 1970s, Congress has become an inkblot, surrendering its constitutional powers to the ever deepening Imperial Presidency and the U.S. Supreme Court.

The lessons from those exceptional periods of American his-

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