

**WAR AND OCCUPATION DOES NOT ONLY KILL
THE BODIES OF THE OPPRESSED BUT ALSO
THE SOUL OF THE OPPRESSOR**

David Segarra

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David Segarra (1976) is from Valencia in Spain, but lives and works in Venezuela. For many years he worked as an independent journalist; but recently, he has been directing documentaries mainly on social and underrepresented issues. He shot a documentary film *Fuego Sobre El Marmara* about the *Mavi Marmara* incident.

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Why did you join the Gaza Freedom Flotilla? What was your motivation?

Palestine has been in my life since I was a kid. In 2009, I visited the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel in order to shoot a documentary film on the Palestinian resilience. I think that is what fascinated me more to this story: The capacity of the Palestinians to maintain their lives, to survive as a people, and to resist through its faith, its roots and its communities... I believe the Palestinians have much to teach to the rest of the world. So when the Flotilla was announced, I firmly tried my best to be there.

When you went to Palestine and Israel for a documentary, what attracted your attention most?

We had been filming not only in Palestine and Israel but also in Egypt. What we saw in Egypt in 2009 was a nation on its knees, and a government who was a serf to Israel, supporting the siege and also maintaining its own population without education, freedom and social justice. In Gaza, we saw a nation inside a prison, along with plenty of destruction, sadness and a hard life; but also we discovered a very tough sense of pride and dignity, and a marvellous desire to be alive and to find beauty in every small aspect of life. In the West Bank, we saw a similar reality – a territory and a nation surrounded by the wall; but people in the refugee camps showed us the real meaning of hospitality and deep happiness. What shocked us was that while we crossed Israel, we discovered there a first world country, very similar to Europe, with the same luxuries of a highly developed country, but civilian people there were fully armed. And most of them looked at us as if we had done something wrong. It was a deep lesson to discover that war and occupation does not only kill the bodies of the oppressed but also the soul of the oppressor.

Could you please tell us what happened during the Israeli attack? I would like to learn your personal experiences and what you witnessed.



David Segarra in the welcoming ceremony when he returned to his country

I filmed the entire attack together with Srdjan Stojiljković and Manuel Tapial. I remember filming the zodiac boats arriving, the helicopter approaching, and the commandos landing on the top deck of the ship. I remember the bullets and explosions everywhere, and the moment when we realised that they were live ammunition. When I entered inside the ship, there was blood everywhere. I saw there the wounded and killed brothers. When the captured commandos were brought in, I saw their very young faces in full panic, fearing they were going to be killed. I remember when the commandos arrived at the pressroom, they pointed us with their laser beams, and how they couldn't bear a direct eye-to-eye contact. It was all like a dream, like a nightmare. Some of us would never wake up from that dream. But the most important thing is that everybody did what they had to do. Nobody panicked, on the contrary, everybody helped each other keeping our own humanity and dignity well alive.

What were the most important consequences of the Freedom Flotilla?

A lot of important things happened thanks to the Flotilla. First of all, those 700 people – regardless of differences in religions, ideologies or cultures – are now a big family, a brotherhood. Second, the people who fought against the commandos might have tended to reflect the same violence they were subjected to; but they rejected to become like the Israelis, and didn't harm the captured commandos. Third, I met in Valencia a Palestinian who told me that the father's family had gone to Gaza to meet his family there. We have to remember that thanks to the Flotilla, Egypt opened the Rafah border crossing a little bit. That was an enormous blow of fresh air into Palestine. The last and sadder one is that we ought to eternally remember the martyrs who gave their lives for the freedom of others, for the Palestinians, and also to defend the humanity as a whole.