

## FOREWORD

The Gaza Freedom Flotilla brought people from all around the world together working to establish the reign of justice on the face of the earth. On it was an ensemble of the virtuous, who can at any given time adopt a position on the side of justice. This ensemble, which came together that day for Gaza, symbolising the world's conscience, would just as easily have stood by justice had it been the Israelis who were oppressed. More than seven hundred peace activists from almost forty different countries on the humanitarian aid flotilla who had set out to this journey in the name of humanity and who were carrying hope to Gaza, were attacked in international waters before the eyes of the entire world by Israeli soldiers, while only expecting to reach Gaza, singing songs of freedom.

The Gaza Freedom Flotilla, carrying humanitarian aid vital for Gaza and screaming out to the world humanity's hunger for justice, woke up to the morning of 31 May to Israeli soldiers' gun shots. During the attack to the Flotilla made up completely of civilians, nine Turkish citizens on board the *Mavi Marmara* lost their lives and more than fifty people were wounded. The Israeli Navy, which stopped the other vessels of the Flotilla using violent means as well, captured each and every passenger of the Freedom Flotilla and sent them to prison, seizing all the humanitarian aid as well as the vessels themselves.

There are leaders, events and works that make history; that lead generations, that open new eras, that become epic... There are strong voices who speak up against existing injustices, altering the course of history... The Gaza Freedom Flotilla may have failed to reach the Port of Gaza, yet it managed to fulfil a historic mission. The Flotilla showed all the injustices Palestinians have endured and the brutality of Israel to the world at first-hand; the Palestinian issue which was previously overshadowed by politics, and kept in the dark through media disinformation and manipulation is now being debated worldwide. And the

voices of those who refuse to accept injustices in the world are now stronger than ever.

This work, *Witnesses of the Freedom Flotilla*, is presented to the benefit of the public by İHH Kitap, the publishing house of the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (İHH) which took the initiative to organize the Gaza Freedom Flotilla within Turkey. This book presents a new perspective to the Israeli attack – that was watched live by the world on TV screens, and on which many television programmes and documentary films are made, many books are written – by making the first-hand witnesses of the attack speak. The book narrates the stories of people such as a wounded man who was shot by nine bullets on the top deck where the Israelis landed, a volunteer who lost her husband before her eyes, an activist who was beaten nearly to death by Israeli soldiers, a filmmaker who was going to shoot a documentary in Gaza, and other lovers of peace who joined the Flotilla from all corners of the world. It shares the most humane dimension of a humanitarian initiative, and fulfils a crucial mission by documenting the unique stories of the activists for leaving a mark in history. We are indebted to Zahide Tuba Kor who worked day and night with great devotion to share this important work with the Turkish and international public. Hoping this work – prepared in Turkish, English and Arabic editions – reaches all those with conscience in the world, and the quest for justice spreads to every corner of the world...

**Attorney F. Bülent Yıldırım**  
**President of the İHH**