

PRESS RELEASE GAZA, PALESTINE

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CALL FROM GAZA FOR GLOBAL RESPONSE TO KILLINGS ON THE FLOTILLA

We Gaza based Palestinian Civil Society Organizations and International activists call on the international community and civil society to pressure their governments and Israel to cease the abductions and killings in Israel's attacks against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla sailing for Gaza, and begin a global response to hold Israel accountable for the murder of foreign civilians at sea and illegal piracy of civilian vessels carrying humanitarian aid for Gaza.

We salute the courage of all those who have organized this aid intervention and demand a safe passage through to Gaza for the 750 people of conscience from 40 different countries including 35 international politicians intent on breaking the Israeli-Egyptian blockade. We offer our sincerest condolences to family and friends who have lost loved ones in the attack.

By sailing directly to Gaza, outside of Israeli waters, with cargo banned illegally by Israel, such as the 10,000 tonnes of badly needed concrete, toys, workbooks, chocolate, pasta and substantial medical supplies, the flotilla is exercising international law and upholding article 33 of the Geneva Convention which clearly states that collective punishment is a crime against humanity.

The hardships of Israel's closure of Gaza have been well documented by all human rights groups operating, most recently by Amnesty International in their Annual Human Rights Report concluding that the siege has "deepened the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Mass unemployment, extreme poverty, food insecurity and food price rises caused by shortages left four out of five Gazans dependent on humanitarian aid. The scope of the blockade and statements made by Israeli officials about its purpose showed that it was being imposed as a form of collective punishment of Gazans, a flagrant violation of international law." The United Nations continuously states that only a fraction of the required aid is entering the Strip due to what it calls 'the medieval siege', with John Ging the Director of UNRWA in Gaza specifically expressing the need for the Flotilla to enter Gaza. The European Union's new foreign affairs minister Catherine Ashton has just reiterated its call for, "an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza."

The people of Gaza are not dependent people, but self sufficient people doing what they can to retain some dignity in life in the wake of this colossal man-made devastation that deprives so many of a basic start in life or minimal aspirations for the future.

We, from Gaza, call on you to demonstrate and support the courageous men and women who went on the Flotilla, many now murdered on a humanitarian aid mission. We insist on severance of diplomatic ties with Israel, trials for war crimes and the International protection of the civilians of Gaza. We call on you to join the growing international boycott, divestment and sanction campaign of a country proving again to be so violent and yet so unchallenged.

Join the growing critical mass around the world with a commitment to the day when Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as any other people, when the siege is lifted, the occupation is over and the 6 million Palestinian refugees are finally granted justice.

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Signatory Organisations:

The One Democratic State Group

University Teachers Association

Arab Cultural Forum

Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel

Association of Al-Quds Bank for Culture and Info

Popular Committee against the Wall and Settlements

International Solidarity Movement

Palestinian Network of Non-Governmental Organisations

Palestinian Women Committees

Progressive Students Union

Medical Relief Society

The General Society for Rehabilitation

Gaza Community Mental Health Program

General Union of Palestinian Women

Afaq Jadeeda Cultural Centre for Women and Children

Deir Al-Balah Cultural Centre for Women and Children

Maghazi Cultural Centre for Children

Al-Sahel Centre for Women and Youth

Ghassan Kanfani Kindergartens

Rachel Corrie Centre, Rafah

Rafah Olympia City Sisters

Al Awda Centre, Rafah

Al Awda Hospital, Jabaliya Camp

Ajyal Association, Gaza

General Union of Palestinian Syndicates

Al Karmel Centre, Nuseirat

Local Initiative, Beit Hanoun

Union of Health Work Committees

Red Crescent Society Gaza Strip

Beit Lahiya Cultural Centre

Al Awda Centre, Rafah

Palestinian Human Rights Foundation (Monitor)