

AUSTRALIANS FOR PALESTINE

PO Box 2099
Hawthorn VIC 3122
Melbourne - Australia
Tel: 03 9818 5080
Fax: 03 9818 5009

info@australiansforpalestine.com
www.australiansforpalestine.com

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Freedom Flotilla 2 – Australian contingent

Providing a Voice

Australian contingent

Four Australians are taking part in the Freedom Flotilla 2, which is planning to sail to Gaza at the end of June. They will be sailing with the Canadian boat "Tahrir" ("Liberation") which will also contain delegations from Canada, Belgium and Denmark. They are joining some 1500 other concerned citizens from over 50 countries to non-violently challenge **Israel's illegal siege on Gaza**.

Australian citizens participating

- **Vivienne Porzolt** from Jews Against the Occupation
- **Michael Coleman** – social worker and youth activist
- **Sylvia Hale** – former Greens MP
- **Nick Wallwork** – graduate student

The International Flotilla

The flotilla will consist of some 15 ships leaving from various ports in the Mediterranean and is made up of groups from all over the world including the United States, France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, the UK, Greece, Turkey, Malaysia, Canada, Belgium, Denmark and Australia.

The names of the ports and dates of departure have been withheld in an attempt to avert the sabotage that prevented ships participating in the 2010 flotilla.

The Australian delegates are already in Europe with the other participants for briefings and training in nonviolent resistance.

Objectives of flotilla participants

- to publicise the blockade's illegality
- to draw attention to the intolerable situation in Gaza and the suffering of the people
- to deliver humanitarian aid and expressions of goodwill from concerned citizens in the international community
- to challenge the foreign policies of countries which uncritically support Israeli war crimes.

Free Gaza Movement

All participants have been working in cooperation and coordination with the Free Gaza Movement. This is an international movement of concerned citizens wanting to break the illegal siege on Gaza by sea. More information is available from their website www.freegaza.org

The call for solidarity

Palestinian civil society has explicitly called for international supporters to mount such campaigns in solidarity with their struggle for freedom and human rights. Also, John Ging, the head of the United Nations in the Gaza Strip, has called upon the international community to defy Israel's blockade and bring humanitarian aid to the territory.

Thousands of people from all backgrounds have rallied to these calls. Thousands wanted to join the flotilla and many survivors from last year's ill-fated flotilla have signed up again. Eminent persons like Archbishop Tutu and four Nobel peace prize laureates have endorsed the mission and have asked the UN for safe passage of the flotilla.

Responsibility of Australian Government

The Australian contingent has called on the Prime Minister to use her government's influence to stop Israel from attacking the flotilla as it has consistently threatened to do. The government should remind Israel of its obligations under international law (see *AFP Briefing Paper 9 – Freedom Flotilla 2 – Stay Human*). A repetition of last year's attack on Flotilla 1 would be an illegal act of international proportions.

Australian citizens are entitled to receive the full protections of the government in the event of attacks on their persons and/or if they are illegally detained.

