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*Prepared by MS/AFP*

### Aussies join ship to break siege of Gaza

## Providing a Voice

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Press Release No 12 – 31 July 2008*

Two Australian peace activists will be aboard two ships that will attempt to break through Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip next week.

Next Tuesday peace activists from 13 countries, including an Israeli professor and an American Holocaust survivor will sail from Cyprus to Gaza aboard the *SS Free Gaza* and *SS Liberty* to deliver medical supplies to the Gaza Strip.

Following the delivery of medical supplies, the ships intend to return to Cyprus carrying exports from Gaza. Ultimately, the peace activists aim is to open Gaza's harbour so that the people of Gaza will be able to trade with the rest of the world without Israeli interference.

Following the victory of the Hamas party in the 2006 Palestinian elections, Israel used its control of Gaza's airspace, territorial waters and border crossings to place it under siege. According to the United Nations, the unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip stands at 45% (higher than anywhere else in the world) with 52% of households in Gaza living below the poverty line "despite significant amounts of emergency and humanitarian assistance".

The Israeli military Spokesman's Office has refused to comment on whether Israel will use force to prevent the peace activists from entering the Gaza Strip.

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