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### Parliamentarians to break siege of Gaza

## Providing a Voice

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Press Release No 13 – 5 November 2008*

On Friday 7 November, 13 European parliamentarians including Clare Short, the UK Secretary of State for International Development from 1997 to 2003, will be defying an Israeli blockade to enter the Gaza Strip aboard the SS DIGNITY.

The boat carrying the parliamentarians and activists will sail from the port of Larnaca, Cyprus at 5.00 pm (2.00 am Australian Eastern Standard Time) with the intention of entering the Gaza Strip on Saturday. This will be the third voyage in which international peace activists have successfully breached Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip, but the first time, in which they have been joined by members of the European Parliament.

“This is a very significant development,” said the organiser of the Free Gaza campaign Michael Shaik in Melbourne, Australia. “The campaign to break Israel’s illegal siege of Gaza is gathering momentum. On our first voyage, the only participants were peace activists. On our second we were joined by a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. This time we are being joined by parliamentarians from England, Ireland, Italy, Turkey, Wales, Switzerland and Scotland. It shows that ordinary people working non-violently can make a difference.”

In August, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories cited the *Free Gaza* initiative as “an important symbolic victory.” He noted that “what is being tested is whether the imaginative engagement of dedicated private citizens can influence the struggle of a beleaguered people for basic human rights, and whether their courage and commitment can awaken the conscience of humanity to an unfolding tragedy”.

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