

## A CALL FROM GAZA IN SUPPORT OF THE FREEDOM FLOTTILA II

12.6.2011

### BESIEGED GAZA, OCCUPIED PALESTINE

We the Palestinians of the Besieged Gaza Strip, on this day, five years after closures began on Gaza, are saying enough inaction, enough discussion, enough waiting – the full siege on the Gaza Strip must end.

Shortly after 2006 democratic election which were supervised by people and bodies from the international community, nations formerly supporting aid and cultural organizations in Gaza withdrew their support. In mid-2007, our borders, controlled by Israel and Egypt, fully closed, locking Palestinians within and preventing imports and exports from crossing our borders.

From December 27 2008 to January 18 2009, Israel waged an all-out slaughter on Gaza, killing over 1500 Palestinians, the vast majority innocent civilians and among them over 430 children, and destroying thousands of homes, businesses, factories and buildings including universities, schools, hospitals and medical care facilities, and damaging vast tracts of our water and sanitation system.

Two and a half years following the cessation of Israel's attacks, almost no homes and few buildings have been rebuilt, our sanitation and sewage system is more dire than ever, raw waste continues to be pumped into our sea –for want of proper treatment facilities –polluting our water and the fish along the coast which fishermen are forced to harvest –banned from entering the 20 nautical miles of sea accorded to Palestinians under the Oslo agreement—contaminating our drinking water and food supply.

Our farmers continue to be shot at, maimed and killed by Israeli soldiers along our border, prevented from working, growing and harvesting their land, denying us a rich supply of produce and vitamins. Nutrient deficiencies and malnutrition continue to rise, affecting our children's growth and their ability to study. Our economy is shut down by lack of functioning factories and electricity. Our students hold little to no prospects of exiting for study abroad, even when placements and scholarships have been secured, due to the Israeli control of the Erez crossing and the Egyptian-controlled Rafah crossing being closed more often than opened. Our ill suffer for want of necessary medications and medical supplies and equipment.

Since 2005, over 170 Palestinian organizations have called for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions to pressure Israel to comply to international law. Since 2005, Palestinians have weekly met in villages in the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, to protest Israel's occupation policies.

Creative civilian efforts such as the Free Gaza boats that broke the siege five times, the Gaza Freedom March, the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, and the many land convoys must never stop their siege-breaking, highlighting the inhumanity of keeping 1.5 million Gazans in an open-air prison.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 22 international organizations including Amnesty, Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid, and Medical Aid for Palestinians produced the report 'Dashed Hopes, Continuation of the Gaza Blockade' calling for international action to force Israel to unconditionally lift the blockade, saying the Palestinians of Gaza under Israeli siege continue to live in the same devastating conditions. Human Rights Watch published a comprehensive report "Separate and Unequal" that denounced Israeli policies as Apartheid, echoing similar sentiments by South African anti-apartheid activists.

The recent announced opening of the Rafah crossing has yet to be fully enacted. Even when open, it will mean little with respect to the imports and exports of goods to and from Gaza and will not improve the plights of fishermen, farmers and Gaza 's unemployment and manufactured poverty rates.

We request that the citizens of the world oppose this deadly, medieval blockade. The failure of the United Nations and its numerous organizations to condemn such crimes proves their complicity. Only civil society is able to mobilize to demand the application of international law and put an end to Israel 's impunity. The intervention of civil society was effective in the late 1980s against the apartheid regime of South Africa . Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have not only described Israel 's oppressive and violent control of Palestinians as Apartheid, they have also joined this call for the world's civil society to intervene again.

We call on civil society organizations worldwide to intensify the anti-Israel sanctions campaign to compel Israel to end to its aggression. We call on the nations and citizens of the world participating in the Freedom Flotilla 2 to continue their plans to sail to Gaza where they would be welcomed by Palestinians. The civil society initiatives of the Freedom Flotillas are about taking a stance of justice and solidarity with besieged Palestinians when your governments will not. We call on the Flotilla movement to grow and continue to sail until the siege on Gaza is entirely lifted and Palestinians of Gaza are granted the basic human rights and freedom of movement citizens around the world enjoy.

Signed by:

University Teachers' Association

Palestinian Nongovernmental Organizations Network

Al-Aqsa University

Palestine Red Crescent Society in Gaza

General Union of Youth Entities

Arab Cultural Forum

General Union for Health Services Workers

General Union for Public Services Workers

General Union for Petrochemical and Gas Workers

General Union for Agricultural Workers

Union of Women's Work Committees

Union of Synergies—Women Unit

Union of Palestinian Women Committees

Women's Studies Society

Working Woman's Society

Palestinian Students' Campaign for the Academic Boycott of Israel

One Democratic State Group

Palestinian Youth against Apartheid

Association of Al-Quds Bank for Culture and Info

Palestine Sailing Federation

Palestinian Association for Fishing and Maritime

Palestinian Women Committees

Progressive Students Union

Medical Relief Society

The General Society for Rehabilitation

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,

GazaGeneral 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

Al-Quds Bank for Culture and Information Society

women section -union of Palestinian workers syndicate

Middle East Childrens' Alliance -Gaza

Local Initiative -Beit Hanoun