

# *Women's Boat to Gaza Set to Begin Journey to Palestinian Enclave*

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Barcelona, September 14 (RHC)-- The Women's Boat to Gaza (WBG) is set to depart the Spanish port of Barcelona and sail to the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip to bring world attention to the plight of Palestinian living under a devastating siege in the coastal sliver.

The flotilla, comprising Amal-Hope and Zaytouna-Oliva vessels, will start the voyage on Wednesday and head to France's Ajaccio. It will then travel through another western Mediterranean port before reaching the shores of Gaza in early October.

The flotilla "seeks not only to challenge the Israeli blockade but to also show solidarity and bring a message of hope to the Palestinian people," the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, which organized the move, said on its website.

The women participants come from more than 15 countries. For the Barcelona-Ajaccio leg, the passengers include Malin Björk, a Member of European Parliament from Sweden, Israeli activist Zohar Chamberlain Regev and retired US. Army Colonel Ann Wright.

Chamberlain Regev, who chairs the WBG's steering committee, said the activists taking part in the journey "find the blockade of Gaza and the occupation of Palestine absolutely unacceptable."

According to the UN, Gaza will be uninhabitable by 2020, said Canadian social worker, Wendy Goldsmith, adding that the WBG "declares that the illegal blockade of Gaza must end, so that every person can live with freedom and dignity."

On May 31, 2010, Israeli commandos stormed the Mavi Marmara, the flagship of a flotilla crewed by an alliance of pro-Palestinian activists who had combined to deliver 10,000 tonnes of aid to Gaza. The Israeli raid killed nine Turkish citizens and injured about 50 other people. A tenth Turkish national later died of his injuries.

The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty. The Tel Aviv regime has waged three wars on the coastal enclave since 2008, including the 2014 offensive, which left more than 2,200 Palestinians dead and over 11,100 others wounded.

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