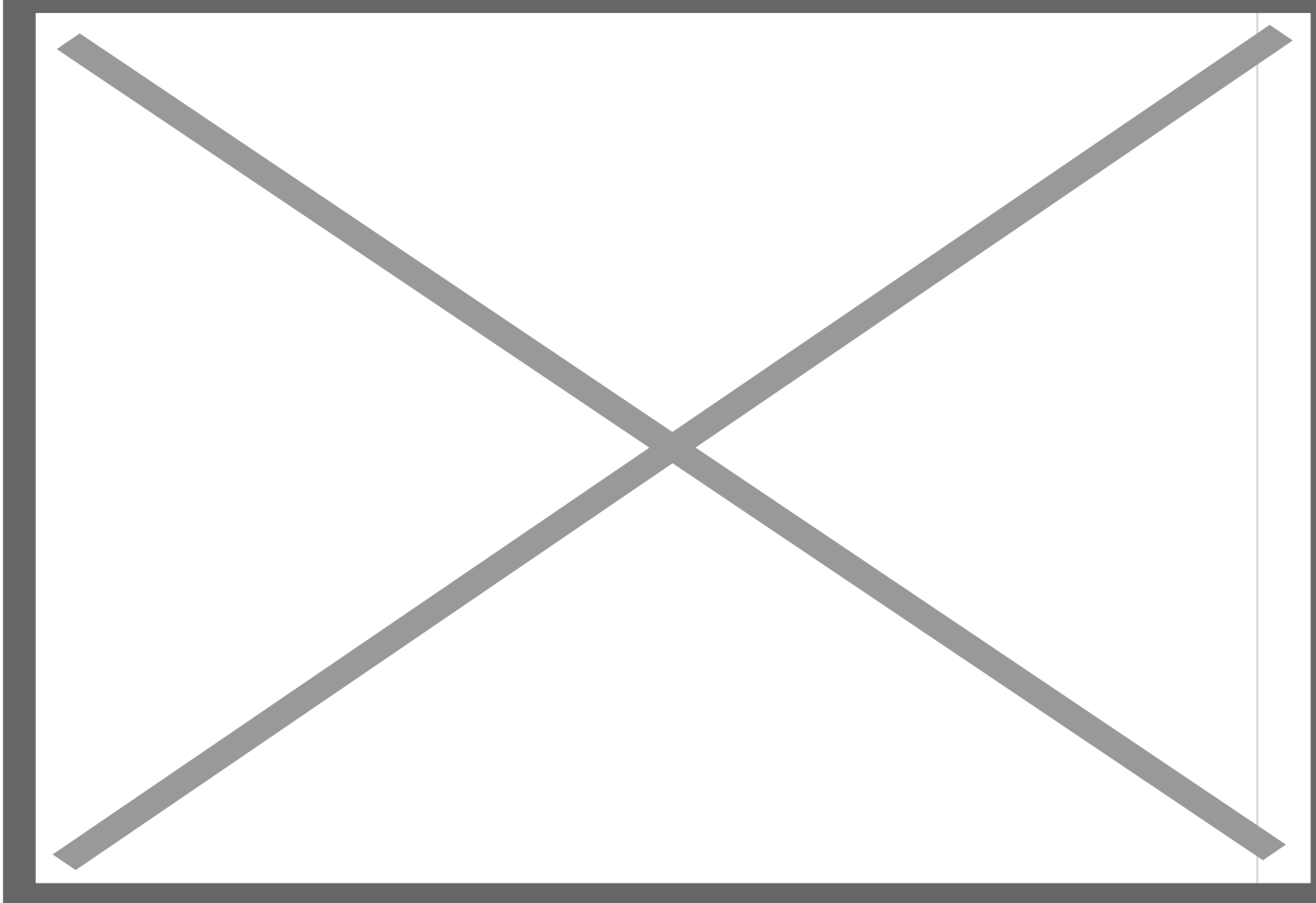


Malaysia imposes docking ban on Israeli cargo ships in solidarity with Gaza

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ZIM, Israel's biggest shipping company, has been singled out in Malaysia's ban on shipping to and from Israel [Amir Cohen/ Reuters]

Jakarta, December 20 (RHC)-- The Malaysian government has imposed an indefinite ban on vessels owned by an Israeli shipping cargo company from docking at its ports in response to the bloody Israeli onslaught against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Ships en route to the occupied Palestinian territories and Israeli-flagged vessels will also be barred from loading cargo at any port in the largely Muslim Southeast Asian nation. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in a statement on Wednesday that the Transport Ministry has been instructed to enforce the ban with immediate effect.

Malaysia's cabinet had in 2002 authorized Israeli-registered companies to dock vessels at Malaysian ports; and in 2005, allowed Israeli-registered ships to anchor in Malaysia. However, Wednesday's statement said that authorizations had been rescinded.

"The Malaysian government decided to block and disallow the Israeli-based shipping company ZIM from docking at any Malaysian port," Anwar said. "These sanctions are a response to Israel's actions that ignore basic humanitarian principles and violate international law through the ongoing massacre and brutality against Palestinians."

Malaysia "also decided to no longer accept ships using the Israeli flag to dock in the country" and ban "any ship on its way to Israel from loading cargo in Malaysian ports."

Anwar said his country was confident its trade would not be affected by the decision.

Malaysia does not have diplomatic ties with Israel.

Malaysians have kept up a strong show of support for the Palestinian people's struggle to claim their sovereign rights, and strongly condemned the cruelties being perpetrated by the Israeli regime in Gaza. Malaysians in various parts of the country have held marches and motorcycle convoys to voice their support for the Palestinian people, who are suffering from oppression and atrocities committed by the Israeli regime.

Muslim scholars have called on all people to show undivided support for Palestine because the Palestinian issue is related to humanity and not just religion.

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