

New Freedom Flotilla to set sail for Gaza in defiance of Israel's naval blockade

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The Akdeniz RoRo, part of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, waits to depart from the Tuzla seaport, near Istanbul on April 19, 2024. (Photo by AFP)

Istanbul, April 21 (RHC)-- A flotilla of ships, carrying some 5,000 tons of food, drinking water, and medical aid, is expected to depart from Turkey in the coming days in an attempt to break Israel's blockade of the Palestinian enclave of Gaza and bring much-needed relief to residents of war-torn Gaza.

During a press conference on Friday, Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC), an international humanitarian organization, which is involved in the relief effort, announced that at least three vessels are set to depart from the western Turkish port of Tuzla on the Sea of Marmara, south of Istanbul.

Approximately 1,000 professionals, including doctors, lawyers, and academics, are set to join the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, hoping to set sail from Istanbul for the besieged enclave soon, despite Israel's threats.

No departure date has yet been set as organizers said they are now waiting for permission to sail from the Turkish authorities, adding that they have notified the Turkish government, the United Nations and other international institutions about the mission earlier.

Gaza has been under an Israeli land, air and sea blockade since 2007.

Activists from 12 national human rights groups from various countries including Germany, Malaysia, Palestine, Norway, Argentina, Spain, Canada, and South Africa, accompanied by journalists, will reportedly participate in the effort.

"The Gaza Freedom Flotilla is composed of unarmed civilians that are here on a peaceful mission to challenge the Israeli blockade of Gaza and to deliver humanitarian assistance as requested by the International Court of Justice," explained Ann Wright, a retired US army colonel and former diplomat.

Speaking to the Anadolu news agency, Wright addressed the possibility of an Israeli attack and said that Israel's record is quite full in this regard, adding that another misstep by Israel could jeopardize its own security.

Fauziah Mohd Hasan, a doctor affiliated with the Malaysian Freedom Flotilla Movement, highlighted the extensive preparations for the mission, which involved over 280 prominent individuals from various fields worldwide.

Dylan Saba, an US writer and attorney who is planning to travel with the flotilla, said he was joining in part because "there is an obligation for citizens of the world to act, where governments have failed, and to act in the spirit of international law."

In 2010, a similar mission with ships carrying more than 600 activists from more than 30 countries, gained worldwide attention after an Israeli raid on a flotilla that included a Turkish ship, the Mavi Marmara, killed 10 people and sparked a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Israel.

Since the onset of the Israeli war on Gaza on October 7, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 34,049 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured nearly 76,901 others.

Israel has blocked water, food, and electricity to Gaza, plunging the coastal strip into a humanitarian crisis and is using starvation as a weapon of war against the people of Gaza.

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