

Egypt tries to sabotage Global March to Gaza

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On Tuesday and Wednesday Egypt detained and questioned hundreds of people, many of them French, Canadian and Algerian, who had landed at Cairo airport or were staying in hotels in the city before joining the Global March to Gaza.

According to Egyptian human rights lawyer Ragia Omran, some were stranded at the airport for hours, without water or food, around 400 were deported and two full flights turned back.

On arrival back in France, some of those deported said Egyptian security services had offered them food containing nails and screws. They are part of around 4,000 people from over 80 countries who planned to fly to Cairo, then travel by bus to El-Arish in Egypt's North Sinai on June 12 and then walk the 50 kilometres—a three-day journey—to the Rafah border crossing into Gaza, camping overnight.

Egypt's naked hostility towards the aid convoy confirms that the Arab masses are on a collision course with their rulers. It is the el-Sisi regime that is acting as Israel's Gaza border guard, but the genocide of the Palestinians proceeds under the protection against popular outrage offered to Israel by all the Arab states.

Unlike Israel's seizure of the British-flagged charity vessel *Madleen* and the detention of its crew of 12, including environmental activist Greta Thunberg, this time thousands of people are involved. They aim to reach Rafah by June 19 and set up a protest encampment for several days at the Egyptian border in coordination with NGOs and humanitarian groups. They do not intend to enter Gaza, remaining at the border and handing over aid and 300 tents to the Palestinians.

Organizers say their purpose is to call for an end to the war on Gaza, push for the thousands of aid trucks stranded outside the Strip to be allowed to enter and pressure their governments to cut ties with Israel and impose sanctions.

The United Nations has described Gaza as the "hungriest place on Earth", with nearly half a million people facing acute malnutrition, starvation, illness and death. Rafah, once home to 250,000 Palestinians, has been razed to the ground, along with Jabalya and Beit Lahia. Around 90 percent of Gaza's population have been displaced, with the vast majority living in makeshift tents.

Among the participants are Mandla Mandela, tribal chief of South Africa's Mvezo Traditional Council and grandson of Nelson Mandela, Dr. Hicham El Ghaoui, who has participated in three medical missions in Gaza since the war began, and Manuel Patial, one of three Spanish participants on board the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in 2010 when Israeli forces attacked and boarded the vessel, killing 10 activists.

The Global March participants are joining more than 1,500 people from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia taking part in the Grass Roots Land Convoy, also known as the *Soumoud*—meaning Steadfastness in Arabic. The convoy set off in a more than 100-vehicle aid convoy from the Tunisian capital Monday, travelling through Algeria and Libya to reach Egypt by Friday. It includes trade unionists and politicians, human rights activists, athletes, lawyers, doctors, journalists and members of youth organisations.

In Sirte, Libya, they were stopped by the authorities, at Egypt's request. It is unclear whether they will be able to enter North Sinai, as the Egyptian authorities insist that all foreign delegations seeking to visit the Gaza border area—including the city of El-Arish and the Rafah crossing—must obtain "prior approval" through official channels such as Egyptian embassies abroad, or via foreign embassies in Cairo. They insist that the none of the participants will be allowed to cross the border into Gaza "for reasons of sovereignty and security".

Entry into North Sinai has long been restricted, in part due to an ongoing military campaign against armed Islamist forces. But following the onset of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, Cairo has only allowed a handful of popular convoys—those organized by state institutions and allied political parties—to reach the Rafah crossing.

Another humanitarian convoy, under the name "Dignity Convoy", has set off from Lebanon via Syria, Jordan and Egypt for the Rafah border crossing.

Pro-government figures in Egypt tried to discredit the convoys as a "ploy to embarrass Egypt", suggesting connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is outlawed in Egypt.

On Wednesday, Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz branded the participants of the two convoys "jihadist protesters" and called on the Egyptian government "to prevent the arrival of jihadist demonstrators to the border of Egypt-Israel and not to allow them to carry out provocations and to try to enter into Gaza". He added, "This will endanger the security of Israeli soldiers, and we will not allow it". Katz warned that if Cairo failed to stop the march, the Israel military would do so.

According to *Madr Masr*, 40 Algerian nationals were deported on Wednesday morning after being detained for 24 hours on arrival at Cairo airport to prevent them from participating in the March. Activists said that more than 10 members of the Moroccan delegation were turned back at the airport, along with another group of Algerians and Moroccans, including three lawyers who were held for more than 13 hours before being put on a return flight. Several Turkish citizens were detained and deported from their Cairo hotel.

The actions of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi—whom US President Donald Trump once described as "his favourite dictator"—are of a piece with Egypt's longstanding role, since the 1979 Camp David Accords, as a direct accomplice in Israel's suppression of the Palestinians. In return for its role as border guard and regional policeman, Egypt receives the second largest US military aid in the world after Israel.

From the beginning of Israel's siege of Gaza in 2007, Egypt played a key role in maintaining the blockade. Cairo refused to even consider ending its peace treaty with Israel and closing Israel's embassy. Following el-Sisi's seizure of power in 2013, Cairo destroyed

tunnels carrying goods into Gaza and allowed Israel's drones, helicopters and warplanes to operate in Sinai.

For the last 20 months, el-Sisi has backed Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinian enclave, deepened his collusion with the fascist government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As part of the ceasefire arrangements earlier this year, el-Sisi temporarily accepted dozens of Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli jails and deported to Egypt prior to their relocation to Turkey or Qatar.

There are more than 150,000 Gazans stranded in Egypt and living in dire conditions, unable to return following Israel's destruction of the Rafah crossing in May 2024. El-Sisi has accepted Israel's new policies for the reopening of the Rafah crossing that will allow Palestinians to exit Gaza but prevent their return to the besieged enclave, presaging a broader strategy of permanent displacement.

The Butcher of Cairo's support for Israel, US imperialism's proxy in the region, is his quid pro quo for Washington's commitment to back his security in the event of a mass movement to unseat him like that of the Arab Spring of 2010-11. El-Sisi has worked strenuously to demobilise and suppress widespread opposition within Egypt to Israel's crimes and his own his failure to support the Palestinians amid mounting tensions over rising poverty as inflation reached 16.8 percent in May. The authorities have arrested 186 people over the last 20 months, with more than 100 still in detention, intensifying the crackdown with the arrival of the Global March, to prevent Egyptians joining it.



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