

Global Sumud Flotilla to set sail from European and Tunisian ports against Israel's genocide in Gaza

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On Sunday, over 50 ships carrying humanitarian aid and activists from 44 countries are set to depart from Barcelona, Genoa, Sicily, Greece, and other Mediterranean ports, joined on September 4 by vessels from Tunis, under the name Global Sumud Flotilla. Sumud is Arabic for “perseverance.”

The Flotilla is the largest organised civilian maritime mission yet against the land and sea blockade of Gaza organized by Israel with the assistance of the Egyptian army to the south. It brings together four initiatives: Freedom Flotilla Coalition, Global Movement for Gaza, the Maghreb Sumud Convoy and the Southeast Asian Nusantara Sumud Initiative. Thousands of doctors, lawyers, journalists, and cultural figures have registered to join or support the flotilla, with some 30,000 reportedly on waiting lists.

Among those joining are former Barcelona mayor Ada Colau, Mariana Mortágua of Portugal's Left Bloc, Emma Fourreau, an MP for La France Insoumise, and Bruno Gilga of the Movimento Revolucionário de Trabalhadores in Brazil. Swedish activist Greta Thunberg will also board one of the boats. Acclaimed Irish novelist Naoise Dolan has announced her participation, alongside actors such as Susan Sarandon and Gustaf Skarsgård. Others, including Mark Ruffalo, Liam Cunningham, Alessandro Gassman, and Zerocalcare, have publicly endorsed the initiative.

The Global Sumud Flotilla marks the largest civilian-led maritime effort in solidarity with Gaza since the 2010 Mavi Marmara. Israeli commandos stormed the aid ship in international waters, murdering nine people—eight Turkish citizens and one Turkish American—and seriously wounding many others.

Announced by Thunberg two weeks ago, its declared

aim is to open a corridor to deliver aid to the besieged population of Gaza and to raise global awareness of the need to break Israel's blockade. Israel, backed to the hilt by Washington and the European powers, has made clear it will not permit such a corridor to be forced open.

In May, a ship named *The Conscience* was hit by drone strikes off the coast of Malta, which caused a fire and a breach in the hull, injuring four. Last June, the *Madleen* departed from Catania, Sicily with medical supplies, baby formula, and flour, including Thunberg and MEP Rima Hassan from France Insoumise, before being violently intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters, its crew abducted and deported.

The following month, in July, the *Handala* set sail from Siracusa, Italy, later intercepted after leaving Gallipoli, with passengers beaten, phones confiscated, interrogated, and many forced onto hunger strike to protest their detention.

This June, the Sumud Convoy saw around 1,000 people attempt to travel from Tunisia to the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Israel, until the NATO-backed Libyan government blocked their passage. At the same time, thousands of people tried to walk to Rafah from the nearby city of Arish under the banner of the Global March to Gaza. They were met with a violent crackdown from the Egyptian government; hundreds were either detained or deported.

The *World Socialist Web Site* unconditionally defends the democratic right of this flotilla to sail, and opposes all attempts to suppress it, whether by US and European imperialist powers or by the Israeli state.

Nevertheless, it must be bluntly stated that initiatives such as the Global Sumud Flotilla cannot halt the

genocide. The strategy of appealing to imperialist powers or to the Israeli regime itself is utterly bankrupt. This is underscored by the organisers' appeals for government officials across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East to join the mission, in the hope that their presence might shield activists from repression.

Figures like Colau, Mortágua, Hassan and Fourreau are leading members of parties like Spain's Podemos and Sumar, Portugal's Left Bloc and France Unbowed that have joined pro-Gaza protests on a perspective of pressuring capitalist governments to restrain Israel. Yet the genocide has only escalated because these very governments are enablers of Israel's crimes. Israel acts as imperialism's enforcer in the Middle East, and its genocide in Gaza is inseparable from their preparations for wider war, above all against Iran, Russia and China.

For over 22 months, Israel's far-right government, backed by Washington and the European capitals, has pursued a genocidal campaign in Gaza. In early March, Israel also sealed off Gaza by land, letting in no supplies. The UN has declared famine in Gaza City. More than 62,000 Palestinians have been killed, the majority women and children and now hundreds are being starved to death. Hospitals, schools, and refugee camps have been bombed. Last Wednesday, Israeli jets carried out a "double tap" strike on Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, killing at least 20 people including five journalists.

The genocide will not be halted by moral appeals or protests aimed at pressuring imperialist governments. The only social force capable of stopping it is the international working class. Workers, bound together across borders by a common interest and common struggle, have the power to halt arms shipments, shut down production, and break the financial and logistical lifelines of the genocidal machine.

There is immense potential for such a movement. Across Europe, the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, workers and youth have repeatedly demonstrated their opposition to war and genocide, joining mass protests. Last week in Italy, dockworkers in Genoa blocked weapons shipments aboard the Bahri Yanbu, a Saudi-owned vessel bound for Israel. In June, dockworkers at the port of Marseille-Fos refused to load a container of spare parts for machine guns and cannon tubes onto a ship headed for Israel.

Port workers in Barcelona, airport ground crew in

Belgium, and staff at Athens International Airport have all taken similar steps since the genocide began. Last year, workers at 11 major Indian ports declared they would not handle weapons bound for Israel, while Greek dockworkers stopped a shipment of 21 tonnes of ammunition. Moroccan dockworkers have also refused to load Maersk container ships carrying parts for F-35 fighter jets used by Israel in its genocide in Gaza.

Workers and youth across every country must take up this struggle as their own, raising definite demands: an immediate halt to all shipments of weapons and military aid to Israel; a boycott of trade and economic activity with Israel to sever the financial lifeline of genocide; the indictment and prosecution of corporations supplying Israel with the means of mass murder; and the arrest and prosecution of Israeli leaders and their accomplices for war crimes.



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