

# IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

30 June 2009

## ISRAEL ATTACKS JUSTICE BOAT

**Kidnaps human rights workers; confiscates medicines, toys and olive trees**

[23 miles off the coast of Gaza, 15:30pm] - Today Israeli Occupation Forces attacked and boarded the Free Gaza Movement boat, the SPIRIT OF HUMANITY, abducting 21 human rights workers from 11 countries, including Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire and former U.S. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney. Passengers and crew are being forcibly dragged toward Israel.

"This is an outrageous violation of international law against us. Our boat was not in Israeli waters, and we were on a human rights mission to the Gaza Strip," said Cynthia McKinney, a former U.S. Congresswoman and presidential candidate. "President Obama just told Israel to let in humanitarian and reconstruction supplies, and that's exactly what we tried to do. We're asking the international community to demand our release so we can resume our journey."

According to an International Committee of the Red Cross report released yesterday, the Palestinians living in Gaza are "trapped in despair." Thousands of Gazans whose homes were destroyed earlier during Israel's December/January massacre are still without shelter despite pledges of almost \$4.5 billion in aid, because Israel refuses to allow cement and other building material into the Gaza Strip. The report also notes that hospitals are struggling to meet the needs of their patients due to Israel's disruption of medical supplies.

"The aid we were carrying is a symbol of hope for the people of Gaza, hope that the sea route would open for them, and they would be able to transport their own materials to begin to reconstruct the schools, hospitals and thousands of homes destroyed during the onslaught of "Cast Lead". Our mission is a gesture to the people of Gaza that we stand by them and that they are not alone" said fellow passenger Mairead Maguire, winner of a Noble Peace Prize for her work in Northern Ireland.

Just before being kidnapped by Israel, Huwaida Arraf, Free Gaza Movement chairperson and delegation co-coordinator on this voyage, stated that: "No one could possibly believe that our small boat constitutes any sort of threat to Israel. We carry medical and reconstruction supplies, and children's toys. Our passengers include a Nobel peace prize laureate and a former U.S. congressperson. Our boat was searched and received a security clearance by Cypriot Port Authorities before we departed, and at no time did we ever approach Israeli waters."

Arraf continued, "Israel's deliberate and premeditated attack on our unarmed boat is a clear violation of international law and we demand our immediate and unconditional release."

[www.FreeGaza.org](http://www.FreeGaza.org)

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### PASSENGERS KIDNAPPED

Khalad Abdelkader, Bahrain

Othman Abufalah, Jordan

Khaled Al-Shenoo, Bahrain

Mansour Al-Abi, Yemen

Fatima Al-Attawi, Bahrain

Juhaina Alqaed, Bahrain

Huwaida Arraf, USA

Ishmahil Blagrove, UK

Kaltham Ghloom, Bahrain

Derek Graham, Ireland

Alex Harrison, UK

Denis Healey, UK

Fathi Jaouadi, UK

Mairead Maguire, Ireland

Lubna Masarwa, Palestine/Israel

Theresa McDermott, Scotland

Cynthia McKinney, US

Adnan Mormesh, UK

Adam Qvist, Denmark

Adam Shapiro, USA

Kathy Sheetz, USA