

Tuesday, 29 May 2018

URGENT APPEAL – GAZA ‘FREEDOM BOAT’ CAPTURED BY ISRAELI NAVY

To the attention of:

Mr António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

UN Headquarters
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY, 10017, USA

Mr Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Palais Wilson
52 Rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

Your excellencies,

It is with grave concern that I direct this urgent appeal to you on behalf of the Palestinian human rights organisation Al-Haq in relation to the ‘Freedom Boat’, which left Gaza’s shores this noon, Palestine time, on Tuesday, 29 May 2018, in a peaceful attempt at challenging Israel’s unlawful closure of the Gaza Strip, amounting to collective punishment.

Amongst the boat’s passengers are patients in need of medical attention and treatment, including Palestinians injured by the Israeli occupying forces during their suppression of the peaceful Great Return March protests, launched on 30 March 2018 in Gaza. Since then, the Israeli occupying forces have killed 126 Palestinians, including 96 during peaceful protests.

The ‘Freedom Boat’ was encircled by the Israeli Navy, which fired warning shots at its passengers. As of half an hour, contact with the flotilla has been lost and the boat has reportedly been captured by the Israeli Navy. Al-Haq is seriously concerned at the lethal force to which Israel may resort against the boat’s passengers, given Israel’s previous lethal attacks against peaceful flotillas attempting to lift the unlawful closure and blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Al-Haq warns that any resort to force, including lethal force, against the boat’s passengers by the Israeli occupying forces is unlawful, unnecessary, and disproportionate, in violation of international human rights law on the use of force and firearms by law

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enforcement officials, and may lead to the commission of war crimes, giving rise to individual criminal responsibility prosecutable at the International Criminal Court.

Given the gravity of the situation, Al-Haq is calling for immediate action on the part of the international community, through the United Nations to ensure the protection of Palestinians aboard the 'Freedom Boat' launched a few hours ago in Gaza.

Your excellencies, Al-Haq calls on the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure the protection of the lives of Palestinians aboard the peaceful 'Freedom Boat', to ensure Israel does not resort to force, including lethal force against them, and to support this peaceful attempt to lift Israel's unlawful and prolonged closure of the Gaza Strip, which will enter its twelfth year in the coming days.

Yours sincerely,

Shawan Jabarin

General Director

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