



NC4P PRESS STATEMENT

South African academic on board humanitarian ship attempting to break Israel's blockade on Palestinian Gaza

26 June 2015

South African academic and activist, Dr Clint Le Bruyn, is one of the South African members on board the Marianne ship forming part of the Freedom Flotilla III which has set sail from the European port in Greece en route to the Palestinian Gaza Strip. The Freedom Flotilla III is a group of ships that is attempting to break the Israeli blockade on Gaza to deliver much needed humanitarian aid.

The Freedom Flotilla III is made up of three boats, with more than 50 crew and passengers from about twenty countries, including a former president, a Catholic nun, two writers, three parliamentarians, five reporters, a musician, six TV crews and one Israeli parliamentarian, Dr Basel Ghattas, Member of the Israeli Knesset. Dr Le Bruyn is representing the NC4P and the Palestine Solidarity Alliance (PSA) on board the ship.

A similar attempt in 2010 by humanitarian activists, including one South African journalist, ended tragically when Israeli forces boarded the ships (while in international waters in violation of international law) killing nine unarmed activists. The South African government reacted to the 2010 Israeli killings of the humanitarian activists by withdrawing its ambassador from Israel for a certain period of time.

The eight-year Israeli blockade, condemned by the United Nations as a violation of international law, has had a devastating humanitarian cost for the 1.8 million Palestinians trapped in Gaza. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has called it the world's largest open-air prison:

- 80% of the population is now dependent on aid;
- 57% of households don't know where their next meal will come from;
- more than 90% of water is unsafe for drinking
- Basic items like cement and steel are restricted from entering Gaza.
- Not a single home, hospital or school destroyed during Israel's attacks on the Palestinian Gaza Strip last year has been rebuilt.
- The economy is paralyzed, as Israel limits Gaza's exports to just one truckload of goods per day.

Endorsed by South African civil society organizations and movements, unions and political groups:

Ahmed Kathrada Foundation; Al Ansaar Foundation; Al Quds Foundation; ANC Youth League; AMAL (Association of Muslim Accountants and Lawyer: Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel in South Africa (BDS South Africa); COSATU; Friends of Al Quds South Africa; Islamic Medical Association of South Africa; Islamic Council of South Africa; Jamiatul Ulama South Africa; KZN Palestine Solidarity Forum; Kairos Southern Africa; KwaZulu-Natal Palestine Solidarity Forum; Media Review Network (MRN); MSA Union; Muslim Judicial Council (South Africa); Muslim Youth Movement; Not In My Home; Open Shuhada Street (OSS); Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC); Palestine Museum; Palestine Solidarity Alliance (PSA); Palestine Solidarity Association University of the Western Cape (PSA UWC); Palestine Solidarity Forum (UJ PSF); Palestine Solidarity Campaign Cape Town (PSC Cape Town); Palestine Solidarity Campaign Stellenbosch (PSC Stellenbosch); Pietermaritzburg for Palestine (PMB4Palestine); SA-EAPPI; South African Communist Party (SACP); UKZN Theology & Development Programme; University of Cape Town Palestine Solidarity Forum (UCT PSF); UKZN Theology & Development Programme.





- The unemployment rate is one of the highest in the world at nearly 40%.
- Gaza's only electricity plant was bombed last year by Israel, resulting in power outages of up to 18 hours a day. Israel refuses to allow spare parts and reconstruction material into Gaza to repair the facility.

Rev Frank Chikane, anti-Apartheid struggle icon, has come out in support of any peaceful way of to break the illegal Israeli occupation and Israeli siege of the Palestinian Gaza which has caused so much suffering to the people of Gaza, including children and vulnerable citizens of Gaza. Chikane said: "We cannot keep silent while Gaza suffers the dramatic consequences of eight years of blockade." He further urged Israel to end its illegal siege and allow the peaceful humanitarian ships of the Freedom Flotilla III to reach Gaza.

The NC4P expresses its solidarity and support for the Freedom Flotilla III initiative. We further call on South Africa's Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) to demand that the Israeli government and its armed forces allow the Freedom Flotilla and its passengers on board including South African citizen, Reverend Dr. Clint le Bruyns a safe passage into Gaza. Any attempt by Israel to obstruct its movement is a violation of international law. The National Coalition for Palestine (NC4P) is an umbrella body representing over 40 South African civil society structures, ranging from trade unions to religious organizations, students groups, political structures and NGO's.

For more information, contact:

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WhatsApp group for journalists, news desks and media to obtain instant updates live from sea: +30 694292 1386.

Official Flotilla Twitter account and hashtags: @GazaFFlotilla, #FreedomFlotilla and #Isail4Freedom

ISSUED BY REVEREND EDWIN ARRISON FOR THE NC4P (NATIONAL COALITION 4 PALESTINE)

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