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SOUTH AFRICA JOINS THE GLOBAL SUMUD FLOTILLA TO BREAK ISRAEL'S ILLEGAL SIEGE ON GAZA

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Palestine Solidarity activists from across South Africa are preparing to embark on the Global Sumud Flotilla, joining a historic international coalition representing more than forty countries united in a mission of peaceful resistance to Israel's illegal blockade of Gaza. This civilian fleet, the largest maritime effort since the siege began in 2007, carries a message that resonates deeply with the people of South Africa who know from lived history that oppression can be resisted and that liberation will come when the world stands together.

At the launch of the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) on Sunday, 31 August in Johannesburg, Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela recalled that the South African struggle against Apartheid was not just fought by us but its success depended on the important role of our front line states like Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania and Angola. He reminded all present of the importance of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale which was fought in Angola when these states together with the Palestinians fought side by side with us. Mandela declared that "Africa will rise again for our brothers and sisters in Palestine, it is our duty to pick up the baton from our fallen heroes, we say that we are the generation that will stand with Palestine."

We commend South Africa's courageous stand at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where it has powerfully highlighted the need for unhindered humanitarian aid to Gaza, protected under international law. The ICJ's measures reinforce the critical responsibility of all states to act without delay in safeguarding human rights and ensuring the delivery of aid. It is imperative that governments move beyond mere rhetoric and take concrete, immediate steps to end the genocide, support this vital mission, and reaffirm the strength of international solidarity in the face of this impunity. There is not much time left. Governments must act immediately. We also demand that the South African Government moves towards implementing a coal embargo against Israel which continues to fuel the genocide.

The South African delegation is made up of activists, health professionals, artists, journalists and ordinary people who have chosen to act in solidarity with Palestinians living under siege. Their participation reflects the conscience of a nation whose struggle against apartheid was made lighter by the solidarity of the world. Today, that solidarity is returned to Gaza. From Cape Town to Johannesburg, Durban to Pretoria, South Africans are rising to say with clarity and conviction that what is happening in Gaza is genocide, that silence is complicity, and that action is necessary.

The message of this flotilla is echoed in the words of Dr Gabor Maté, the renowned physician and author, who shared a statement of support: "What we are witnessing in Gaza is traumatising and breaking the hearts of millions and millions of people around the world. This flotilla is a gesture of support; it is a gesture of open heartedness of human solidarity. To all those participating, thank you." His words capture the essence of this mission: it is not only about bringing aid, but also about affirming humanity in the face of brutality.

Delegates are coming from Malaysia, Brazil, Morocco, Sri Lanka, the Netherlands, the United States and many other countries and will depart from Barcelona. Mandla Mandela stated that "We insisted that we as South Africa will sail from an African Port and therefore chose to sail from Tunis and we will meet the other delegations in international waters." The South African delegates will join their comrades with a spirit of determination and with the voices of their people behind them. Just as international solidarity helped dismantle apartheid, so too must it help dismantle the apartheid regime that suffocates Palestinians today. From every river to every sea, Palestine will be free.

As witnessed yesterday in South Africa, people across the world are taking to the streets to support the flotilla. Rallies, vigils and demonstrations are being organised in dozens of countries to pressure governments to break their complicity and to demand that humanitarian aid be allowed to flow freely into Gaza.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is not only a humanitarian mission, carrying much needed medical supplies and nutritional aid but it is a moral and political one. This is a nonviolent act of defiance against an illegal siege that has strangled life in Gaza for eighteen years. It is a rejection of starvation as a weapon of war and a rejection of ethnic cleansing, apartheid, settler colonialism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and a rejection of the global silence that has enabled these crimes to continue. It is a declaration that ordinary people can rise above borders and governments to act on behalf of humanity. It is an insistence that the blockade of Gaza must end, that starvation and systematic dehumanisation must end, and that the genocide must end. The delegates carry food and medicine, but they also carry a message to Palestinians: you are not alone.

The flotilla is legal under international law, and justified by ICJ provisional measures, and any attempt to intercept it would constitute an act of piracy. Its strength lies not in weapons or in force, but in unity and in truth. By sailing together, by defying fear and repression, the participants remind the world that justice cannot be blockaded. As the boats move toward Gaza, they carry not only supplies but also hope. They carry the voices of millions who refuse to look away, millions who understand that history will remember who stood for freedom and who stood by while genocide unfolded. The South African delegation adds its voice to this global cry for justice, lifting the banner of solidarity high above the waves.

This is not just a journey across the sea. It is a journey to the conscience of the world. It is a message that humanity will not be silenced, that solidarity will not be stopped, and that Palestine will be free.

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