

Humanitarian Ship to Gaza: Friendship and Solidarity on Board the Spirit of Rachel Corrie

By [Global Research](#)

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KUALA LUMPUR: When the aid ship “The Spirit of Rachel Corrie” set sail for Gaza from Malaysia about three weeks ago, some of the 12 men onboard were total strangers.

Coming from different professions and nationalities, they often present a diverse view on how to go about the mission but as Bernama journalist Mohd Faizal Hassan puts it, the wide range of opinions proves to be the team’s strength when the going gets tough.

“Initially we were not close to one another,” he said in a text message to Bernama, “But after nearly three weeks and going through hardships and challenges together, we are now like family.”

The journey went relatively smooth until the ship, registered as MV Finch, encountered Israeli naval vessels on May 16, which fired warning shots at them, forcing them to turn away from the Rafah shore.

However, the ship remained anchored off the Port of El-Arish, Egypt, due to problems in getting clearance from the Egyptian authorities to berth there, even as supplies were running out.

Mohd Faizal said other challenges included a damage suffered by the ship, having to rely on sea water for daily use and using mineral water to clean themselves.

“We also have to deal with sea-sickness, apart from the disappointment for not being allowed to berth at the port,” he said.

The aid ship is steered by a Malaysian, Capt Abdul Jalil Mansor, who is assisted by two Malaysian crew members, Zainuddin Mohamad and Mohd Jaffery Ariffin, and two Indian nationals, Sharma Chandan Shimla and Pal Satya Prakash.

Apart from Mohd Faizal, a New Straits Times journalist, Alang Bendahara, is also onboard.

Also onboard are Felda volunteer Mohd Radzillah Abdullah, a Malaysian, and three peace activists — Derek Graham and Jenny Graham of Ireland and Julie Levesque from Canada. [member of Global Research]

Mohd Faizal said they do a lot of things together like preparing their food and hauling up essential items from fishermen’s boats into the ship.

“We also talk. We talk about ourselves, from where we are, we talk about the world, about

issues affecting the world; we watch the sun sets, learn the languages of other team members and take pictures...it's as though we have known one another all this while," he said.

"This has somewhat lessened our worries," he said, adding that their time here would be a treasured experience for them.

"We pledge to remain in contact although we may be busy again with our respective duties once we return home."

He described the journey as historic because they were the only team which managed to enter Rafah waters since 1948.

"Our mission is to help the people of Gaza. This is just a small sacrifice compared to the hardship endured by the people of Gaza in the blockaded strip," he said.

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