

Israel Attacks Humanitarian Ship to Gaza

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Israel fires warning shots at M'sian ship

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A Malaysian-owned ship carrying aid for Palestine was intercepted by Israeli naval forces.

KUALA LUMPUR: Two Israeli naval vessels fired warning shots at a Malaysian ship carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza near the Rafah border early today morning (Malaysian time).

All 12 passengers and crew onboard are now safe after Egyptian naval vessels came to their rescue and escorted the "MV Finch" to Al-Arish Port in Egypt, according to Bernama journalist, Mohd Faizal Hassan, who is also on board the ship.

The Israeli boats intercepted the Malaysian ship and ordered the captain to retreat before firing warning shots into the air, Faizal said through calls and the short-messaging service (SMS) to Bernama headquarters here a few hours after the incident.

He said the incident occurred at 6.05am local time (1.05am Malaysian time) when the ship, sponsored by Perdana Global Peace Foundation (PGPF), was followed by the Israeli boats for about half hour before the four warning shots were fired into the air.

The PGPF was founded by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

A PGPF representative, Matthias Chang (picture), said that a ship from Israeli naval forces circled the humanitarian ship twice and fired shots.

"No one was injured," he was quoted in a statement.

Faizal said one of the shots almost hit a crew member Mohd Jaffery Ariffin, causing the others to panic and hide for their safety.

"The Israelis asked us to stop the ship and withdraw to Egyptian waters. We managed to radio the Egyptian army for help.

"After a while, an Egyptian naval vessel came over and the Israeli boats left the scene," he said.

Of the 12 people onboard the ship, seven were Malaysians, while the other five comprised two crewmen from India, humanitarian activists Derek and Jenny Graham from Ireland and

Julie Levesque from Canada.

Faizal said the Israelis violated international law by blocking their ship and firing the shots.

“They were using anti-aircraft .50mm shells,” he said.

Faizal also said New Straits Times (NST) journalist Alang Bendahara managed to capture a video recording of Israel’s cruel action towards them.

According to Faizal, after the Israeli navy fired the first shot, the ship’s Captain Jalil Mansor was heard telling the Israelis through radio: “This is a violation of law against unarmed civilians.”

The following exchange then took place.

Israeli army: This is a warning shot. Turn around.

Captain Jalil Mansor: We are unarmed civilians on a humanitarian mission to Gaza.

Israeli army: This is a closed military zone. It’s a violation. Turn around.

Mansor: We will continue (the mission).

The Israelis then headed to the back of the aid vessel and released a second warning shot into the air.

Graham: This is a violation (of international law). We are on a peaceful mission and unarmed.

Israeli army: Turn around. We will fire again.

Graham: You are firing towards unarmed civilians.

Israeli army: We didn’t fire towards unarmed civilians.

Graham: Looks like firing towards us.

Israeli army: We didn’t fire towards you. That is only a warning shot.

Unnecessary risks

Following that conversation, the Israeli army fired two more shots and threatened: “Next time, we will land on your ship.”

Then the Egyptian navy was heard telling the Israelis on the radio: “Stop firing. They are in Egyptian waters.”

Upon realising the presence of Egyptian naval forces, the Israelis departed.

The Malaysian-owned ship carrying human aid left Greece last Tuesday evening (Malaysian time) and entered the Mediterranean Sea heading towards Gaza, carrying 7.5Km of UPVC sewage pipes to help restore the devastated sewerage system in Gaza.

Meanwhile, at Al Arish Port, an officer with the Egyptian escort team told the Bernama journalist that he was shocked to learn that the aid ship used a route deemed more dangerous than the land route from Egypt into Gaza.

Though lauding the noble objectives of the mission, he cautioned that unnecessary risks should not be taken.

“When a crew member told me that there was a cargo ship in the security zone, I could not believe it because the route it was taking is only used by fishermen. No cargo ship or big vessel has ever been in the location you were in,” he was quoted as saying when making checks on the aid ship.

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