

**Israel bars Gaza-bound aid ship Rachel Corrie**  
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Israel will not allow any ship to reach the Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday, specifically referring to the approaching international aid vessel Rachel Corrie (above).

"We shall not allow the ships to reach Gaza. Not now and not later on," Netanyahu was quoted by local news service Ynet as saying, China's Xinhua news agency reported.

He made the comment in Jerusalem during a meeting of senior ministers convened to discuss how to deal with the Rachel Corrie, a converted merchant ship heading for Gaza in a bid to breach the Israeli blockade on the Palestinian coastal enclave.

NONE On board the vessel are a group of Irish and Malaysian peace activists.

The voyage is another attempt to challenge the siege following the "Freedom Flotilla", which is in the spotlight after being attacked by the Israeli navy in a deadly confrontation on Monday.

Nine civilians were killed and dozens wounded in the highsea showdown.

Sources told Xinhua on Thursday that the Israeli defence echelon is considering boarding the ship in case it doesn't follow the order to dock at southern Israel's Ashdod port.

The Israelis believe that taking over the vessel will be simple, as the Rachel Corrie is a small craft capable of containing only several dozen passengers.

Najib likely to meet volunteers

Meanwhile, in a related development, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is likely to meet the 12 Malaysian nationals released by Israel following Monday's seizure of a humanitarian aid vessel by Israeli troops off the coast of Gaza.

foreign minister anifah aman Foreign Minister Anifah Aman (right) told Bernama in Amman that this may take place after the group's return to Malaysia.

The ministry, in a statement on Thursday, said the group was expected to arrive at the KL International Airport around 5.40am on Sunday.

The Malaysians are to leave Amman for Istanbul, Turkey, on Friday to collect their belongings.

Anifah and the leader of the group, Noorazman Mohamad Samsuddin, spoke to Najib by telephone on Wednesday night during a gathering in Amman to mark the Malaysians' release.

According to the minister, Najib was so concerned about their safety that he had stayed up late to speak to them.

"The telephone conversation took place at 2am in Laos, where Najib had been on an official visit," the minister said.

The 12, including two Astro Awani television crew members, were on board the Turkish ship Mavi Marmara, which was attacked by Israeli forces in international waters on Monday, with 10 people reported killed.

- Bernama

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