

Gaza-bound Rachel Corrie seized by Israelis
Malaysiakini.com
June 05, 2010

The MV Rachel Corrie, the last of the humanitarian aid flotilla to Israeli-blockaded Gaza and with six Malaysian activists on board, was seized by Israeli naval forces at about 2.45pm (Malaysian time) today.

According to a Wisma Putra spokesperson, the vessel is being escorted to Ashdod port in Israel.

None of the 19 activists on board the vessel were reported unharmed, the spokesperson said.

In a statement here, Foreign Minister Anifah Aman said Malaysia strongly demanded that Israel ensured the safety of all the humanitarian activists on board the vessel.

"Malaysia also demands that Israel not to take any drastic and violent military action on the unarmed passengers of the Rachel Corrie," he said.

Anifah also said all the activists on board the Rachel Corrie should be given the necessary assistance to ensure their safety.

Anifah said Wisma Putra was closely monitoring the developments as there were six Malaysians on board the Rachel Corrie, including ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's former aide Matthais Chang and Parit parliamentarian from Umno, Mohamad Nizar Zakaria.

The aid mission is sponsored by the Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO), a Malaysian non-governmental organisation.

Communications cut

The latest confrontation comes just five days after Israeli naval commandos boarded another aid ship in a deadly raid which left nine activists dead, most of them Turkish.

Activists on board Rachel Corrie had previously indicated they would not heed Israeli calls to change course, and would continue to head for their destination - although they were prepared to let their cargo be inspected.

Earlier, a spokesman for the Gaza-based welcoming committee told AFP the Rachel Corrie had been intercepted and all communications with the ship cut.

"Several Israeli boats surrounded them between 30 and 35 miles off Gaza and prevented them from reaching Gaza," Amjad al-Shawa said after speaking by telephone with passengers on the boat.

Israel had earlier warned it would stop the Rachel Corrie - a 1,200-tonne cargo ship named after a US activist killed in 2003 as she tried to prevent an Israeli bulldozer from razing a Palestinian home.

The vessel had been due to join a flotilla of ships which tried to run the blockade earlier this week but was held up for technical reasons.

Israeli naval commandos raided the flotilla before dawn on Monday in a bungled operation which left nine foreign activists dead, most of them Turkish, and scores wounded, among

them seven Israeli soldiers.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/133689>