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Raising funds for a ship to send aid to Gaza

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Perdana Global Peace Organisation chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (centre) with Media Prima and New Straits Times Press executive director Datuk Ahmad A. Talib (left) and Free Gaza Movement chairman Huwaida Arraf at the press conference.

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PUTRAJAYA: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the Fund for Gaza yesterday to help raise funds to buy a cargo ship to send aid to Gaza.

The ship will transport not only food and medicine but also construction materials to help the people in Gaza construct new homes for shelter for the winter.

Dr Mahathir said the fund would help human rights activist of the Free Gaza Movement (FGM) provide enough aid and supplies to the Gaza war-torn victims — mainly children, the elderly and the infirm — who are living in tents with limited supply of food and medicine.

He said the Israeli military regime was not allowing food, medicine, building materials and even books to pass through their blockade on land and sea, which possibly meant even aid supplied by

the United Nations was not reaching Gaza.

“If they are getting enough supplies, why are homes or shelters not being built?” asked Dr Mahathir, who is also the Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO) chairman.

He said that groups of people from FGM from diverse social backgrounds had made seven trips to Gaza through Cyprus onboard small fishing boats laden with supplies.

“People like former US congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and Nobel laureate Mairead Macguire have also joined with FGM for the benefit of the Palestinians.

“They were even detained and later released by the Israelis as they attempted to break the navy’s chokehold on Gaza and provide supplies to the people.”

Dr Mahathir, speaking at a press conference, said that the prime minister’s wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor who is the patron of the Palestinian

Humanitarian Fund, had already contributed RM1.5 million.

FGM chairperson Huwaida Arraf, who was present, expressed gratitude to Malaysia for showing “so much concern about the people there” since her last visit here last month.

She said FGM’s efforts to break the blockade were not merely to provide aid to the people in Gaza but to defy and protest the Israeli siege.

“We are trying to engage more high-profile volunteers and parliamentarians to join us or support us as this would help pressure Egypt to open up its Rafa border crossing to let people from Gaza escape on humanitarian grounds.”

Also present at the launching ceremony was Dr Mahathir’s wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and executive director of Media Prima Bhd and the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd (NSTP) Datuk Ahmad A. Talib.

Ahmad, who is also Yayasan Salam trustee, shared his ex-

perience in Gaza with the guests at the ceremony.

He said he had spent 10 days in Gaza after the Israeli military broke the ceasefire and launched an attack on Gaza, which caused over 1,400 deaths and great destruction.

“I saw how the people there lived their lives daily under constant threat.

“There were warplanes dotting the skies at any given moment and the suffering there was immense.”

He said that Yayasan Salam would be lending support to help FGM deliver its supplies and aid to the people there and appealed to the public and other non-governmental organisations to follow suit.

Those who are interested in contributing to the fund can do so by writing a cheque to KLFCW (Gaza Fund) and send it to Perdana Global Peace Organisation or channel the contribution through the Maybank account at 512334306634.