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Perdana Global Peace Organisation chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (fourth from right) and his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali (fifth from right) welcoming the Malaysian team members of the Viva Palestina humanitarian aid convoy at the KLIA yesterday.

# Glad to be home safe and sound

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SEPANG: After weeks of being in Gaza, the nine Malaysians who were part of the largest Viva Palestina humanitarian aid convoy, were more than happy to arrive home safe and sound yesterday.

Led by Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO) volunteer Matthias Chang, they were among the 450-member convoy who delivered medical aid and other supplies to Gaza.

Malaysia donated four lorry loads of humanitarian aid and an ambulance to the Gaza Elwafa Hospital.

PGPO chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and family members welcomed them at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at 2pm yesterday.

"It's a blessing that all of us are finally home and with no one injured," said Chang, who was with the convoy for more than a month.

He said although the journey was not a difficult one, it was a trying time for all of them because they were stranded in different places.

He said it was the seriousness of the mission and words of encouragement from many people that had kept them going.

Speaking to reporters at KLIA, Dr Mahathir said "certain sections of the media had stopped reporting about the war in Gaza, and this gave people the impression that there was peace in Gaza.

During their time in Gaza, the team said there were several bombings around the hotel where they were staying.

PGPO volunteer Juana Jaafar said she felt sad when the hotel staff, who were calm, told her that the bombings were common occurrences in Gaza.

The Viva Palestina humanitarian aid convoy began its long journey from London on Dec 6 and crossed the Rafah border into Gaza on Jan 7.

The nine-member Malaysian team comprised four PGPO members, four Bernama TV crew and a representative of Yayasan Al-Bukhari.

Two of the PGPO volunteers, Juana and Ram Karthigasu, had fed the *New Straits Times* with information daily to enable this newspaper to provide coverage throughout their journey.