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'We will press on'

Crew of 'Rachel Corrie' determined to break blockade to deliver aid to Gaza

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KUALA LUMPUR: The six Malaysians on board the MV *Rachel Corrie* are determined to break the Israeli blockade to Gaza as a tribute to the nine people killed on Monday.

Despite knowing that they could be attacked by the Israeli navy, the Malaysians and the rest on board the aid ship are determined to reach Gaza with the humanitarian supplies.

Perdana Global Peace Organisation (PGPO) representative Shamsul Akmar Musa Kamal, who is among the Malaysians on board the aid ship, said in a statement that they were hopeful that with international pressure and backing from the various governments, they would be given safe passage to Gaza.

"Glad to hear about the release of fellow Malaysians, although concerned to hear they were

not well treated.

"Hope we don't have to go through the same ordeal but that choice is not ours. We are prepared to face whatever situation that awaits us and we are determined to go ahead and carry on with this mission," said Shamsul, adding that everyone on board was in high spirits.

Shamsul was referring to the attack on the *Mavi Marmara* on Monday by Israeli commandos which saw nine activists killed and dozens injured.

The 12 Malaysians who were on that ship escaped unharmed. They are now in Jordan and are expected back in Malaysia on Sunday.

The *Mavi Marmara* was the lead ship of five other vessels which made up "Freedom Flotilla", which were on its way with humanitarian supplies to Gaza.

Besides Shamsul, the Malaysians on board

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—Shamsul Akmar Musa Kamal
Perdana Global Peace Organisation representative

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Activists agree not to resist Israeli soldiers

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the *Rachel Corrie* are Parit member of parliament Mohd Nizar Zakaria, lawyer Matthias Chang, activist Ahmad Faizal Azumu, TV3 journalist Halim Mohamed and TV3 crew member Jufri Junid.

Also on board are former United Nations assistant secretary-general and advisory panel member of the PGPO, Denis Halliday, and Nobel laureate Mairead Maguire.

The ship, which is carrying supplies sponsored by groups in Malaysia, Ireland, Scotland and Britain, left Malta on Monday.

Until press time, it was learnt that no Israeli ship had been seen in the vicinity of *Rachel Corrie* and it was sailing alone.

AP reported that Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen had appealed to Israel to allow the *Rachel Corrie* to deliver aid to Gaza. He, however, conceded that supplies of concrete on board would be a problem because Israel considered it of military use.

Cowen said Ireland had appealed to Israel to let the ship "complete its journey unimpeded and discharge its humanitarian cargo in Gaza" but was not optimistic this would happen.

The ship is also carrying wheelchairs and medical supplies. It was supposed to join the flotilla that Israeli commandos intercepted on Monday but was delayed by mechanical problems.

Israeli officials said regardless of what the *Rachel Corrie* was carrying, the ship would be diverted to an Israeli port if it challenged Israel's naval blockade of Gaza.

They have pledged to deliver Irish medical supplies to Gaza by road but will not permit shipments of concrete, which can be used to reinforce military positions as well as rebuild Gazans' homes and roads.

The Irish activists on board insisted they would not accept diversion to an Israeli or Egyptian port, because their campaign was designed to challenge the naval blockade and Israel's right to dictate what went into Gaza.

One of the activist, electrician Derek Graham, said all aboard had agreed to offer no resistance if their ship was boarded by Israeli soldiers.

He said they had agreed to sit down and put their hands in the air when Israeli forces approached.

Graham said *Rachel Corrie's* 15 passengers and crew members were determined to break the blockade in tribute to the nine people killed on Monday.

"It's more vital than ever that we continue. If we don't deliver this aid, then those people have died in vain," he told Irish broadcasters BTE.