'MALAYSIAN VOLUNTEERS HELD IN ISRAEL FREED'

Arrangement made with Turkiye to fly them home from Istanbul after health checks, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR

ALL 23 Malaysian volunteers involved in the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) humanitarian aid mission detained by Israeli forces have been released and should return home in one or two days.

The Malaysians and hundreds of other volunteers from more than 40 countries were held by the Israeli regime for three days after their ships were intercepted in international waters off Gaza.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the Malaysians were on their way to Ramon Airport in southern Israel and would be flown to Istanbul on a special flight arranged by Turkiye.

"Based on my discussion with our ambassador in Ankara, it is best for the volunteers to stay in Istanbul for at least a day.

"This will allow them to undergo health checks and recover from the trauma and stress they faced, as well as the harsh treatment by the Israeli regime and its forces.

"They will likely depart for home tomorrow night (Sunday) or the day after. That is what we are arranging now. Such a development is very encouraging," he said in an announcement broadcast live across all his social media pages.

Anwar said the arrangement to bring the Malaysian volunteers home was made with the help of the Turkish government through Turkish National Security Council chief Dr Ibrahim Khalil.

"Through these negotiations, we are not only concerned about the safety of Malaysians, but also the wellbeing of everyone involved, including those from Europe, our friends from Indonesia and others who joined the GSF humanitarian mission.

"For now, I am focusing all my attention on securing the release of the Malaysians.

"Alhamdulillah, we pray to Allah that their journey will be safe and successful, that they arrive in Istanbul and are brought back to Kuala Lumpur."

Since the flotilla was halted and volunteers were detained on Oct 1, the government has sought the release of the Malaysian volunteers and to bring them home.

Anwar hailed the humanitarian mission's success in increasing global awareness of the oppression faced by Palestinians in Gaza.

He believed the mission also succeeded in shaping international sentiment, which contributed to the success of the Gaza peace deal brokered by United States President Donald Trump.

Despite the challenges of delivering aid to Gaza, he said the flotilla made a significant impact by exposing the actions of the Israeli forces to hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

"They know it is not easy to reach Gaza under the Israeli regime, but they have made a major contribution in raising global awareness.

"This regime does not only oppose what it labels as terrorist groups, which to us are movements to liberate Palestine and Gaza, but it also prohibits and strongly blocks any form of humanitarian aid.

"Such actions only happen when a country is led and governed by a philosophy that is cruel and uncivilised. A civilised nation would at the very least allow humanitarian assistance to be delivered."

On Malaysia's conditional support of the Gaza peace plan, Anwar said there was a need for guarantees of full freedom and independence for the Palestinian people.

He said the government's decision on the matter took into account the positions of Arab and Islamic countries, as well as Hamas's stance.

"On the agreement, I have expressed conditional support because we still want to see assurances of Palestine's freedom and independence."

He said Hamas had accepted the initial terms calling for an end to attacks, the liberation of Gaza and the creation of humanitarian space, as well as the release of all detainees both in Gaza and in Israel.

He said further details of the agreement must be refined to ensure a collective consensus was achieved between Hamas, neighbouring Arab countries and other Islamic nations.

In a separate development, Anwar said he had spoken to nine Malaysian volunteers aboard the *Conscience* and *TM Denmark Boat,* which were part of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition that at press time had entered the yellow zone in waters off Gaza.

"Their contribution in upholding the principles of humanity stands as an example to all Malaysians, especially future generations, on the true meaning of courage, determination and unwavering solidarity."