

PM condemns latest interception of Gaza aid ships

> Detention of nine Malaysians by Israeli forces being closely monitored, says communications minister

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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has condemned the interception of humanitarian aid ships from the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) and Thousand Madleens to Gaza (TMTG), which included Malaysian volunteers, by Israeli forces in international waters at about 10.50am Malaysian time yesterday.

"I strongly condemn this provocative act and violation of international law.

"The act of detaining humanitarian ships bringing aid for the people of Gaza is inhumane and violates the basic principles of human rights and universal humanitarian dignity," he said in a Facebook post.

He demanded that all Malaysian activists and volunteers be released immediately, given proper protection and not subjected to mistreatment while in detention.

"The Madani government will do its utmost to safeguard the lives of all Malaysians involved in this humanitarian mission and will work with partner countries and international organisations to secure their release as soon as possible."

Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi

Fadzil said the government is closely monitoring the detention of nine Malaysians by Israeli forces and is prepared to act through the highest diplomatic channels.

He said Wisma Putra is following the matter closely and is ready to take action should the same process experienced by activists in the Global Sumud Flotilla mission recur.

"I believe, *Insyaa-Allah*, Wisma Putra is monitoring the issue and is prepared to take the necessary steps, including through top-level diplomacy and our relations with several countries that have diplomatic ties with Israel.

"We are waiting for further reports because, if Israel detains and processes them in the same manner, we would certainly receive some feedback" he said during a press conference after the Letter of Appointment Handover Ceremony for members of Bernama's Supervisory Council and Board of Governors yesterday.

All nine vessels from the FFC and TMTG humanitarian mission were expected to enter the red zone at 5pm Malaysian time yesterday.

However, Humanitarian Care Malaysia (MyCare) confirmed that the flotilla, including the *Conscience* and *Umm Saad* vessels, which were carrying nine Malaysians, was intercepted by Israeli forces before it could proceed further.

"Eight Malaysians were on board the

Conscience and one was on the *Umm Saad*," MyCare said, adding that further details were still being verified.

The *Conscience*, which departed from Porto Otranto in Italy on Sept 30, is led by Mohd Alauddin and carries doctors Dr Fauziah Mohd Hassan, Dr Hafiz Sulaiman and Dr Ili Syakira Mohd Suhaimi, lecturers Prof Dr Mohd Afandi Salleh and Dr Noorhasyimah Ismail, MyCare Board of Trustees member Norsham Abu Bakar and Astro Awani journalist Syafik Shukri Abdul Jalil.

Another Malaysian, Dr Maziah Muhammad, is aboard the *Umm Saad*, which left Catania in Sicily on Sept 27 with seven other vessels en route to Gaza.

The FFC and TMTG flotilla was reportedly attacked and illegally intercepted by the Israeli military some 120 nautical miles (220km) from Gaza.

According to initial reports, the unarmed crew, which included doctors, journalists and elected officials, were abducted and more than US\$110,000 (RM518,000) worth of aid supplies destined for Gaza's civilian population was seized.

The current whereabouts of the crew and the seized supplies remain unknown.

The flotilla is part of a humanitarian peace mission organised by the FFC in collaboration with TMTG to deliver aid and raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which remains under Israeli blockade.

In total, the mission involves about 150 participants from 25 countries, with MyCARE leading the Malaysian delegation.