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BREAK THE SIEGE ON GAZA NOW, GLOBAL SUMUD FLOTILLA ACTIVISTS' DEMAND!

September 8, 2025 — South Africa

Last month, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz warned that Gaza City could "turn into Rafah and Beit Hanoun... Soon, the gates of hell will open ...".

Apartheid Israel has kept their genocidal promise, and recent reports confirm that at least one child is killed every hour on average, over 40 000 young people have sustained life altering injuries. The numbers that are being quoted by international human rights groups and the United Nations state that since October 2023 over 62 000 Palestinians killed in Gaza, two thirds are women and children. These figures exclude those who are killed through starvation, die of injuries and lack of medical assistance and buried under the rubble. These inhumane atrocities are built upon an 18-year blockade of Gaza. In May 2025, UN Women estimated that more than 28 000 women and girls have been killed in Gaza since the beginning of this recent war on Gaza.

Extermination, ethnic cleansing of an indigenous people and the total annexation of the land of Palestine has been the systematic agenda of the war mongering Zionist regime for 78 years. On 1 April 1988, at the height of the popular uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories commonly known as the First Intifada, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir vowed that Israel would crush the Palestinians "like grasshoppers".

Every day for over 700 days we stand witness to the livestreamed genocide on the Palestinian people.

We see the daily intensification of suffering, of mass killings, relentless bombings, and ethnic cleansing that has targeted medics, journalists and children while bombing Gaza indiscriminately.

That Israelis and some in our own country support this racist action of extermination is beyond comprehension and deeply concerning for those who value freedom, human rights and dignity for all. Only ardent racists, white supremacists and fascists now stand with Israel.

Reports from Gaza show that the Israeli army has been using retrofitted armored personnel carriers (APCs) loaded with bombs that are sent into densely populated areas like neighborhoods and displacement centers, before they are remotely detonated. These attacks continue alongside an extensive bulldozing operation in the city and the constant aerial bombardment.

People in Gaza are exhausted from just trying to survive another day amongst the ongoing bombardments, drone attacks, targeted shooting, forced displacements, and acute starvation. A resident in Gaza said *"We're afraid that the Israeli invasion will get even deeper into Gaza City and that Civil Defense crews will not be able to reach the places they bomb, nowhere in Gaza is safe, whether north or south. Bombs chase residents from their homes, from their displacement centers, and even from their tents."*

Journalist, Rasha Abou Jalal said *"Like so many other Palestinians in Gaza, I have ended up in a tent—the enduring symbol of displacement. I am camped out on the rubble with my husband and children. The merciless Israeli military machine is bearing down on us, getting closer every day and there is nothing we can do. But we won't leave here".* She continued describing the latest escalation of what we have been witnessing daily, *"the army deploys robotic vehicles loaded with explosives into the heart of residential blocks and detonates them, causing massive destruction. Then they go to another neighborhood and do the same thing: killing anyone who remains there. Their goal is to erase Gaza City entirely through this method."*

This is a systematic scorched earth operation that now openly declares what we all knew long ago to be a military operation to erase the Palestinian people and force them off their land. This ethnic cleansing is backed by the United States, Germany and other Western countries who not only supply weapons and military support but also active combatants serving alongside the IDF.

The mask is off, and the opportunistically misinterpreted religious ideology that endorses the illegal occupation of Palestine and promotes the settler colonialism on stolen Palestinian land and homes has been exposed. More than this the veil of the holocaust committed on European Jews by Nazi Germany in the second World War has been removed and it is plain to see that Israel is but a militaristic racist apartheid colonizer that must be eradicated to save humanity.

What stands between a more just and humane world and the rise of fascism is the international solidarity actions and the forces of resistance. As activists our resistance is our collective non-violent action, and this has grown from every town and city in every country across the world. This weekend hundreds of activists from over 40 countries joined the **Global Sumud Flotilla** to establish a humanitarian corridor to Gaza, carrying vital humanitarian aid such as food, medicine and baby formula.

South Africa has a long history of resistance against the horrors of apartheid that devastated millions of lives. This resistance lives in our blood, from generation to generation. Our resistance against injustice is intertwined with the resistance of the people of Palestine against the illegal Occupation. We cannot stand by as over a million people receive orders to evacuate their land and just as many are starving because of the Israeli created famine.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is inspired by the Palestinian peoples resistance and 'Sumud'. Rifka Eid, a mother from Gaza, explains that *"Sumud refers to the unshakable determination of Palestinians to remain on their land, preserve their identity, and resist oppression through their very existence. It's a daily, quiet, and powerful form of resistance, refusing to give up despite decades of occupation, displacement, and violence. Whether it's rebuilding a demolished home, harvesting olives under threat, or simply staying rooted in place, Sumud is how Palestinians turn survival into resistance. And today, the very act of existing in Gaza amid unimaginable genocide, destruction, siege, and loss is "Sumud". It is not just endurance. It is resistance through presence."*

This enduring resistance resonates with the majority of South Africans who fought to dismantle apartheid and colonialism and continue to fight for human rights and justice. We salute the South African volunteers and activists who have joined the largest civilian maritime mission to break the siege on Gaza. The Global Sumud Flotilla will set sail to Gaza in the coming days.

We call on our government to echo the call made by the global solidarity movement on world governments to protect all the delegates of the Global Sumud Flotilla, to ensure the success of the mission by giving meaning to the many statements and pronouncements on public platforms, and upholding international law.

We further call on the United Nation to secure a military intervention to end Israel's merciless ethnic cleansing and genocidal occupation of Palestine.

We call for the world's leaders to stop the holocaust of the Palestinian people, establish a protection force as per the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution, General Assembly Resolution 377 (V) and hold Israel accountable for its crimes.

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The South African delegation includes:

Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela: a leading South African advocate for Palestinian liberation. He has marched to Gaza, spoken out against Israel's apartheid policies, and consistently called for boycotts and sanctions. He continues his grandfather Nelson Mandela's legacy of solidarity. His leadership in the formation of the Global Sumud Flotilla, and his active participation in this historical mission is an inspiration to all South Africans and the global solidarity movement.

Zukiswa Wanner: an award-winning writer and cultural activist. She received the Goethe Medal in 2020 and later returned it in protest against Germany's support for Israel. Her travels to Palestine inspired her essay *Vignettes of a People in an Apartheid State*, translated into multiple languages. She has spoken globally on Palestinian solidarity, including as Africa4Palestine's spokesperson and as part of a UN expert panel on the Question of Jerusalem. Zukiswa is at the forefront of the growing movement calling for an academic and cultural boycott of genocidal Israel.

Nurain Saloojee: a 22-year-old audiologist with a deep passion for human rights and social justice. For the past five years, she has been an active member of the Palestine Solidarity Alliance Youth League, working to amplify youth voices and advocate for meaningful change. Her commitment to activism is rooted in her faith and inspired by a proud family legacy of resistance and advocacy. She strives to combine her professional knowledge with her values to make a tangible impact on the communities she serves. Nurain together with majority of the youth in South Africa are the leading voices that are putting the values of liberation and human rights front and centre in our everyday discourse.

Dr Jared Sacks: an activist, writer, and researcher. He has a PhD from Columbia University and is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Johannesburg. He has long been involved in struggles for land, housing, and social justice in South Africa, including compiling the anthology *No Land! No House! No Vote!* by the Symphony Way Pavement Dwellers. His current focus is on Palestine solidarity, where he plays a leading role in South African Jews for a Free Palestine (SAJFP), contributing legal expertise, building boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaigns, and organizing protests and non-violent direct actions.

Reaaz Moola: a community leader and Chairperson of his local welfare committee. He has extensive experience in international humanitarian missions and draws on decades of service and a faith-rooted commitment to justice. At 54, he speaks on the ethical imperative to aid Palestinians and mobilise community structures for meaningful impactful action.

Elham Mouaffak Hatfield: a French-born humanitarian and member of the Global Movement for Gaza. She has stood in solidarity with Palestinians in South Africa, France, Brussels, and Cairo, where she focused on direct aid to displaced families. In Durban North, she leads a community disaster-relief initiative supporting families in crisis. As a mother of two, Elham grounds her activism in everyday life, working for a world where dignity, freedom, and safety are non-negotiable.

Dr Fatima Hendricks: an Occupational Therapist, mother of two and cancer survivor. Dr Hendricks has 3 masters degrees, a doctorate and 30 years of international experience in health and education programme development. Her work highlights the devastating impact of oppression on health, education, and family life, and has taken her to South Africa, Nigeria, the USA, Turkiye and the Syrian border. She is giving voice to the crime of Genocide as a 'mass disabling event' and is inspiring awareness of the Palestinian right to live freely and peacefully. She is the author of *Please Forgive Me* and *Living Love*.

Fazel Behra: a devoted father of four and grandfather-to-be, rooted in Actonville, where his family was relocated during apartheid. As a 54-year-old, he has endured the loss of both parents but continues to honor their resilience. A passionate entrepreneur and humanitarian, Fazel has engaged in relief work for Syrian refugees and now joins the Global Sumud Flotilla out of his deep faith and commitment to justice. He is driven by love for his family, his community, and his belief in dignity and freedom for all.

Dr Zaheera Soomar: born in apartheid South Africa, Dr. Zaheera is an international social impact and humanitarian leader with over 20 years of experience across Africa, the Middle East, North America, LATAM, and Asia. She specialises in education, social development, and refugee empowerment. She holds a Doctorate on the Future of Work and an MBA in Strategy & Leadership. A mother of three and avid explorer, she has travelled to more than 75 countries and climbed three of the world's Seven Summits. She currently resides in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

Irshaad Ahmed Chothia: a devoted father of three from Johannesburg who owns a business in the wood industry, where he also practices as an artist. He is embarking on the Global Sumud Flotilla to stand against injustice, aiming to help end the blockade on Gaza, ensure the free flow of humanitarian aid, and work towards ending genocide and global apartheid.