

Press release

The policy of force has failed, prison walls broken

End the blockade – completely!

Ceasefire now – for the sake of Sderot and of Gaza!

Saturday 26.1.08: A countrywide relief convoy and Israeli demonstration in solidarity on the Gaza border with a parallel Palestinian demonstration in the Strip.

It is impossible to keep one and a half million people in a huge prison, and if you try an explosion is bound to happen, as happened at the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt. The residents of the Gaza Strip, like those of Israel and every other place in the world, have the fundamental right of free access to the outside world, for people and goods.

The Israeli Coalition Against the Siege continues preparations for the protest convoy to the Gaza border, on Saturday January 26, in co-ordination with the Palestinian Coalition which is preparing parallel actions inside Gaza and in Ramallah, demanding a complete end to the blockade of Gaza. The policy of naked force, undertaken by Olmert and Barak, has utterly failed. It is neither desirable nor possible to renew the blockade. Nor will the continuing military offensive on Gaza end the shooting of missiles at Israeli territory.

We'll go to the Gaza border, in co-operation with Palestinian partners inside Gaza, to show there's an alternative to siege and rocket-fire – an alternative of ceasefire, peace and quiet, and the flourishing of Sderot and Gaza alike.

On Saturday, 26 January 2008, a humanitarian convoy of supplies headed by peace and human rights organisations will go from Nazareth, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beer Sheva to the Gaza Strip border, decked with signs "Lift the Blockade!" The convoy will meet up at 12.00 noon at Yad Mordechai Junction and all will then travel together to a hill which overlooks the Strip, where a demonstration will take place at 13:00. Speakers will be Shulamit Aloni, Uri Avnery, Ronit Matalon, Hassan Jabareen, Nurit Peled-Elhanan and Prof. Jeff Halper. There will be a 'phone link between the Israeli demo and hundreds of Gazans on the Gaza side in Gaza City at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, demonstrating as part of the "Palestinian-International Campaign to End the Siege," one of whose spokesmen is psychiatrist and human rights activist, Dr. Eyad Sarraj.

The convoy will contain sacks of flour, food supplies and other essential products, especially water filters. Water supplies in Gaza are polluted, with nitrates at a level ten times the maximum recommended by the World Health Organisation. Due to the Israeli blockade, Gaza has a critical shortage of water filters, creating an intolerable violation of minimum humanitarian standards.

Organisers of the convoy will be appealing to the army for immediate permission for the goods to be allowed into the Strip, and are prepared for an ongoing campaign next to the border crossings, together with a public and judicial appeal; nearby kibbutzim, which are within the range of the Qassam rockets and mortars, have offered their warehouses for storage of the convoy's goods.

Simultaneous demonstrations will be taking place in Rome, Modena, Bologna, Grosseto, Naples, Milan, Paris, Poitiers, Toulouse, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Nantes, Orleans, Cleveland, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, London, Montreal and Cape Town, and this may not be all.

Activists will embark on the convoy 8.30 a.m. departure from Reading Terminal in Tel Aviv, 8.45 a.m.

from Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem or join the general convoy as it leaves at 12 noon from Yad Mordechai Junction, or go individually to the demo, which will take place at “Nevi Mari Lookout” near Kibbutz Maflasim (from Yad Mordechai Junction, go on Road 34 and at Gavim Junction turn right onto Road 232, after about 6 kms, immediately after Kibbutz Maflasim, turn right and go for a short distance to the site). A map showing the site of the demonstration is available on the website:

<http://toibillboard.info/26janmap.jpg>

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Participating organisations: Gush Shalom, Combatants for Peace, Coalition of Women for Peace, ICAHD – The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Bat Shalom, Bat Tzafon for Peace and Equality, Balad, Hadash, Adalah, Tarabut- Hithabrut, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, AIC – The Alternative Information Center, Psychoactive – Mental Health Workers for Human Rights, ActiveStills, The Students Coalition (Tel Aviv University), New Profile, MachsomWatch, PCATI – The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Yesh Gvul, Gisha, Local Television on the Internet, Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, “On the Left Side”, Faculty for Palestinian-Israeli Peace (Israel).