



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Arab charity to break Gaza siege with \$2m shipment of cancer medicine

For More Information, please contact:

(Gaza) Caoimhe Butterly, +972 598 273 960

(Cyprus/Gaza) Lubna Masarwa, +972 505 633 044

(Cyprus) Ramzi Kysia , +357 99 081 767

(LARNACA, 4 December 2008) - The Free Gaza Movement announced a joint mission with Qatar Charity, a Qatar based relief organisation, to sail to Gaza with \$2 million dollars worth of cancer medicine this Saturday, December 6th.

Through this precedent setting voyage, Qatar Charity will become the first Arab organization to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. The Free Gaza Movement has successfully challenged the siege on three previous occasions this year, landing missions in Gaza in August, October, and November. The Free Gaza ships are the first to dock in Gaza Port in over 41 years.

Lubna Masarwa, one of the movement organizers, stated that, "I'm confident that we will reach Gaza. We are unarmed civilians carrying desperately needed medical supplies to other unarmed civilians. It would be obscene for Israel to use violence against us in order to prevent the delivery of these medicines."

Israel maintains absolute control over Gaza's borders and airspace, and has imposed an increasingly brutal blockade on its 1.5 million civilians for over two years, drastically increasing poverty and malnutrition rates.

According to Masarwa, "What Israel is doing to the people of Gaza should be considered a crime. Food and medicine are not weapons, the world must not allow them to be used as weapons."

Israel temporarily lifted some restrictions on aid workers and journalists today for the first time in a month. However Caoimhe Butterly, Gaza Project Coordinator for the boat missions, labeled the move "a fig leaf for an ongoing, all-encompassing policy of collective punishment, starvation and humiliation. The solution to this catastrophe isn't temporarily opening Erez, but ending the Occupation once and for all. We hope the Qatari mission will inspire Palestine's neighbors to mount similar missions and form the basis for direct and continuing political action in the Arab world."

The passengers on board the Dignity this Saturday will include:

- 5 Qatar Charity officials, including one Moroccan National
- 2 Qatari local governmental representatives
- Australian, American, British, and Italian human rights workers
- A British surgeon traveling to Gaza to volunteer in local hospitals for the next several weeks
- International journalists from Al-Jazeera TV and McClatchy Newspapers

###