

## Sailing into Gaza (Update 4)

Contributed by Yvonne Ridley  
Tuesday, 05 August 2008

The enormity of what the Save Gaza Campaign is about to do is now beginning to hit home, and home is a place which has been on my mind the last 24 hours.

Israel has the power to turn off their tap water - and often does. Israel has the power to switch off their lights, stop food and medical aid reaching them and often does

The enormity of what the Save Gaza Campaign is about to do is now beginning to hit home, and home is a place which has been on my mind the last 24 hours.

Home is where my husband wants me to be "right now" as he said last night. Home is also another place, it's the family home where my mother lives and where she wants me to be "right now". Home obviously means somewhere which is safe and secure and in the arms of your loved ones. Well that's what it means to me and millions of others around the world. But just what does home mean if you live in the Gaza Strip?

Many of us are wearing Arabic t-shirt at the moment bearing the words: "Gaza on my mind" and Gaza is very much on my mind. It is the place where I want to be. It is the place where I want the international headlines to be focussed for all the right reasons. It is the place where I want us all to be in the next few days - in fact, I want us all to unite and be Gazans for the day.

Gaza is home to 1.4 million Palestinians and the sad thing is they don't feel safe. They are under siege, at the mercy of a brutal, hostile military from another land. They are shot at, their homes demolished on a Zionist whim, and no mercy or respect is shown for age - if you have an olive skin, are a babe in arms or a pensioner you are "untermenschen" as far as the Israeli regime is concerned. Yes, it is the Nazi word meaning sub-human which was reserved for the Jews during the rise of Hitler - and now we have a classic case of the abused becoming the abuser.

Israel has the power to turn off their tap water - and often does. Israel has the power to switch off their lights, stop food and medical aid reaching them and often does.

The only thing Israel can not do is steal the oxygen of Gaza which fills the lungs of the old and young so they can wail, and cry and scream. Sadly no one hears because these people have been cut off from the rest of the world.

They live in the 360 square kilometres of the Gaza Strip, making it one of the most crowded places on earth. In 1948, just 80,000 people lived in the same area. Now, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 993,818 of the residents of the strip are refugees and 75 per cent of them live in eight camps, where the population density can reach over 75,000 people per square kilometre.

Despite all of the power which Israel wields over this tiny piece of land, the government is still not happy. Now there are moves to try and stop our peace boats from sailing in to Gaza with some hearing aids for the children.

The Zionists are trying to put pressure on the Government of Cyprus to block our attempts to smash the siege of Gaza - but what they forget is that Cyprus knows only too well the cost of occupation. Cyprus has been occupied for more than three decades following the Turkish invasion of the 70s. There is only one way the Cypriot Government will fall - and that will be on the side of right and not might.

Come hell or high water, our boats The Liberty and Free Gaza will set sail any day now - we are doing it not for ourselves, but for humanity. And when we land on the beaches, that is the day we will all become Gazans - armed with nothing more than messages of love and peace. Is the Israeli war machine fuelled with so much hate there's not room for one ounce of humanity?

One of my fellow passengers Donna Wallach, a Jewish lady who has lived in Israel and now resides in San Jose, California, told me how, despite the hardships suffered under Israel, she is always greeted with love and affection from Palestinian children when she visits the occupied lands.

"You know Yvonne, Palestinians don't bring their children up to hate Jews. Sadly the same can not be said in Israel where the children are indoctrinated against Palestinians. It is a tragedy.

"In Israel some people really do say 'the only good Arab is a dead Arab'. The racism is quite shocking. I had to leave in the end it was too much to bear".

Donna Wallach has so much love to give that I know she can't wait to be a Gazan for the day, and I also know that despite her Israeli passport she will be loved just as much by those who she wants to support.

Because, at the end of the day, we are one big family - and families help each other out.