



Contact:

Susan J. Landu 215-438-5593 or

Howard M. Lenow 508-314-3180

www.ajjp.org/jewishboat

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AMERICAN JEWS FOR A JUST PEACE TO CO-SPONSOR JEWISH BOAT TO GAZA

American Jews for a Just Peace (AJJP) has agreed to serve as the U.S. coordinator for the Jewish Boat to Gaza, its organizers have announced. The boat, sponsored by a coalition of international Jewish organizations dedicated to peace with justice in Israel/Palestine, is scheduled to sail from an undisclosed location in the Mediterranean this July. It will head toward Gaza in an effort to break the siege imposed by Israel in 2006. The passengers will include Jews from Germany, the U.K., and the United States, including at least one survivor of the Nazi Holocaust.

In a statement released today, AJJP said that it is joining with Jüdische Stimme (Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Near East) and the British group Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JfJfP) in sponsoring the boat as a call to the leaders of the world, to "help Israel find her way to reason, to a sense of humanity and a life without fear." An April 2, 2010 report by Amnesty International noted, "Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip leaves more than 1.4 million Palestinians cut off from necessary and life-saving supplies, exacerbating a situation of extreme and desperate poverty."

This trip will be the latest in a series of civilian efforts to break the blockade. On May 31, a Freedom Flotilla of ten ships carrying passengers from 37 countries was intercepted in international waters by the Israeli Defense Forces. At least nine civilians were killed aboard the lead ship, the Mavi Marmara. Israel has rejected calls for a neutral investigation of the incident by the international community.

The Jewish Boat's captain, Glyn Secker, is a British Jew who has been active in the movement for freedom and justice in Palestine for many years. Secker confirmed that the boat will carry school bags and books, donated by German schoolchildren, musical instruments, and art materials, as well as essential medicines and small medical equipment. Absolutely no weapons will be on board, and all participants will be trained in the principles of non-violence. Organizers are requesting that the Israeli government and the Obama Administration guarantee safe passage for the boat, its passengers and cargo.

Further information and an opportunity to support the Jewish Boat to Gaza are available on the website of American Jews for a Just Peace, www.ajjp.org/jewishboat.