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Palestine:

Gaza flotillas - stand together, for as long as it takes

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On Saturday, 4 April, in Marseille's Vieux-Port, at the foot of the Mucem museum, several hundred people crowded the pier to cheer the 19 humanitarian boats of the flotilla setting sail for Gaza.

Speeches, slogans, music and even a batucada in the colours of Palestine: the fervour and hope were palpable. "Bravo, we're proud of you," people shout as boats pass by in front of the jetty.

In l'Estaque, a popular organization

Hope also animated the activists of the flotillas in the morning, at the port of l'Estaque. After months of work on an improvised construction site brought to completion, thanks in particular to the mobilization of the inhabitants of this district of Marseille, the flotillas are finally ready for departure.

"We have already won," says Nemo, skipper of the Ryoko boat, renamed "the Nour" in tribute to the struggle of Palestinian women. "It's a victory in the sense that we managed to organize ourselves in a non-hierarchical way, in an autonomous way and we managed to take this place, so it's a popular victory, because nothing was expected."

The coalition had contacted several ports, but none had responded, and the shipyard was therefore set up in l'Estaque on the proposal of its inhabitants. There, the preparation of the boats and collective life have worked thanks to self-organisation: "We work in the form of a collective, with centres of skills, centres of desire, centres that make sense for people. And people are invested in it," explains Nemo.

A multifaceted mobilization

This motivation of all is of course rooted in the continuity of the mobilization for Palestine of the last two years, but it is also found in the political commitment of everyone.

"It is the struggle of all oppressed peoples that is symbolized by the struggle of the Palestinian people," says Tino, an activist on board and member of the navigation centre. For him, the flotilla "is also a way of mobilizing on land around the Palestinian question and anti-imperialist issues." He thought that the question of war would be central in the coming years and hoped that the flotilla would allow "a broad and common front against the war."

Beyond the symbols, Claude Léostic (Association France Palestine Solidarité) reminds us that the genocide is still underway in Gaza and that "this humanitarian flotilla is first and foremost aimed at the Palestinians, to show them that our solidarity is intact." But for her, this initiative is also aimed at our leaders whose "behaviour is scandalous and illegal." She describes the flotilla as a citizen pressure to "move the lines", a message to end our leaders' complicity with Israel's genocidal and colonial policies.

"We are trying to put pressure from our workplaces to put an end to partnerships with Israel," says Linda Sehili, a member of the international committee of the trade union *Solidaires*. "This flotilla is the continuation of our militant,

political and trade union actions. And this is only the beginning; we will have to remobilize everywhere on the territory with collectives for the right to self-determination of Palestinians.”

In the face of genocide, building solidarity

There is indeed an urgent need to remobilize: the new Israeli law on the death penalty for Palestinians and the Yadan law are at the centre of the discussions. A brutalization of Western colonialism, while, as a report by Urgence Palestine and the Palestine Youth Movement has just revealed, “between October 2023 and March 2026, more than 525 shipments of military equipment were shipped by French manufacturers” to Israel.

Faced with these flows of death, the flotilla embodies a flow of solidarity. It carries medical equipment, seeds and fishing boat repair materials. Obviously, the flotilla is not an end in itself. It is an anchor point for the construction of a huge movement of solidarity. This is the challenge for all the activists and all the organizations of this flotilla.

This is what motivates Tino: “The flotilla is a means of action that allows you to regain control of things. Everyone feels very powerless in the face of the situation there. We have to remain humble, we are not going to change the face of the world, but it is a vector of hope.”

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