



Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA calls on PM Rudd to condemn attack on Gaza aid flotilla

Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA, the overseas humanitarian aid agency of the ACTU, is calling on Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to condemn yesterday's attack by the Israeli military on the aid flotilla taking much needed assistance to the people of Gaza.

"The murder by Israeli commandos of a reported 19 civilians while in international waters is a breach of international law and against all norms of civilised conduct" said Peter Jennings, the Executive Officer of Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA.

"The international community, including Australia, must now hold Israel to account over this attack and its continuing economic siege of Gaza, which contravenes international law", Jennings said.

"We know first-hand from the recent trade union delegation to Gaza that this siege is creating immense human suffering for the 1.5 million people living in Gaza. We know that in cases of deprivation and shortages, it is the women and children who usually suffer the most and in the three years since the economic sanctions by Israel began, the people of Gaza have dropped from a middle-level standard of living to being crushed by absolute poverty".

According to the United Nations, 85% of the people of Gaza have been driven below the poverty line, insufficient food is being permitted into Gaza for the 1.5 million people, along with inadequate medicines and no cement to allow rebuilding of houses, schools, hospitals and public buildings following the destruction caused by the Israeli invasion and bombing of Gaza in December 2008-January 2009. The majority of the Palestinians in Gaza are refugees under the protection of the United Nations.

Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA believes the free flow of aid to people in need is essential and that no civilized state should resort to an unprovoked military attack against a humanitarian mission. The Gaza Freedom Flotilla was carrying not just aid to Palestinians suffering from an illegal siege, but also carrying hundreds of civilians, parliamentarians, journalists, human rights lawyers, doctors and solidarity activists from almost 50 countries.

Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA offers its deepest condolences to those families who have lost loved ones in this devastating attack.

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