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Viva Palestina: Supporting Hamas Under the Guise of Humanitarianism

Introduction

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Viva Palestina is a campaign that seeks to send aid convoys to Gaza. Organized by then-British parliamentarian George Galloway, a far-left anti-Zionist and antiwar activist, Viva Palestina sent three successful convoys to Gaza in 2009-2010.

The latest convoy, an international effort with activists from a variety of countries, visited Gaza in January 2010. The convoy, dubbed "Lifeline 3," left London on December 6, 2009, and traveled through several countries in the Middle East on its way to the Gaza border crossing in Egypt. Large rallies to welcome the activists were held at various stops in the Middle East and representatives of [Hamas](#) spoke at rallies in Jordan and Lebanon, praising the activists and thanking them for their courage.

This is the latest example of close relations between Viva Palestina activists and Hamas. The first convoy, which traveled from the UK last February, donated cash and vehicles to representatives of the Hamas government in Gaza. The second convoy, which left from the U.S., met with Hamas officials, including Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, during their trip in July.



The third Viva Palestina convoy consisted of approximately 500 activists who brought 200 vehicles full of aid and medical supplies. Though the convoy had initially planned to enter Gaza on December 28, to mark the anniversary of the start of the Gaza war, the convoy was delayed on several occasions by Egyptian authorities who denied them entry into Egypt from Jordan and forced them to circle back and enter Egypt through Syria.

Upon the convoy's arrival in Egypt on January 3, Egyptian authorities announced that they would not allow approximately 60 of the convoy's vehicles to enter Gaza and suggested that the vehicles be sent to Gaza through the Israeli border instead. Violent clashes broke out between the activists and Egyptian riot police, and at least 20 of the activists suffered injuries. One Egyptian border security guard was killed by a Palestinian sniper from Gaza.

The convoy entered Gaza, without 60 of its vehicles, on January 6. While in Gaza, members of the convoy reportedly met with Hamas officials and donated the aid they had brought to a non-governmental organization called the Central Council of Charities.

Convoy leader George Galloway, who had repeatedly spoken out against the Egyptian government for delaying the convoy, was barred from Egypt upon returning from Gaza and was declared "persona non grata." A Foreign Ministry statement confirmed that he will not be allowed into Egypt again because of "incitement."

Despite this setback, Galloway has pledged to continue sending Viva Palestina convoys to Gaza. He indicated that a fourth convoy featuring President Hugo Chavez is in the works.

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