

16 Countries Warn Israel Against Attacking Gaza-Bound

MALTA (Dispatches) – Sixteen countries, including Turkiye, Spain, Brazil, and Bangladesh, have jointly issued a warning against any “unlawful or violent” actions targeting the Global Sumud Flotilla as it sails toward the besieged Gaza Strip to deliver humanitarian aid.

In a statement, the foreign ministers emphasized the flotilla's mission to provide critical supplies and raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. They stressed the importance of upholding international law and humanitarian principles.

“The Global Sumud Flotilla has informed about its objective of delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and raising awareness about the urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people and the need to stop the war in Gaza,” the ministers said.

“Any violation of international law and human rights of the participants in the flotilla, including attacks against the vessels in international waters or illegal detention, will lead to accountability,”



A Palestinian flag is seen as people gather at the port of Ermoupolis before the departure of two sailing boats, Electra and Oxygen, part of the Global Sumud Flotilla aiming to reach Gaza on Syros island, Greece, Sept. 14, 2025.

the statement warned.

The declaration was endorsed by the foreign ministers of Turkiye, Spain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Ireland, Libya, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mexico, Pakistan, Qatar, Oman, Slovenia, and South Africa.

The flotilla, currently near Malta, comprises over 40 vessels carrying humanitarian cargo such as

medical supplies and baby formula. More than 300 participants are on board, including lawmakers from France, Brazil, Spain, Argentina, Algeria, Italy, and Germany.

The journey has faced multiple setbacks. Organizers delayed departure from Tunis by 11 days after drone strikes damaged two vessels, and several ships failed safety inspections. On September

10, the British-flagged Alma was hit by a drone near a Tunisian port, sustaining fire damage. The previous day, another vessel, Family, caught fire after a drone dropped an incendiary device near its fuel storage.

Bruno Gilga, a flotilla spokesperson, said the mission carries not only aid but also “a message of support from the peoples of the world that we are with the Palestinian people.”

Comedian and activist Tadhg Hickey, aboard the lead ship, described the voyage as “relentless” but necessary. “The message of today is we go on regardless, on boat, unbroken,” he told Middle East Eye.

The flotilla is accompanied by two independent ships: one carrying legal observers and another Italian sea rescue vessel, Lifesaver 2.

Israel has previously raided aid flotillas in international waters, including the Handala on July 27 and the Madleen on June 9, raising further international concern.

French Retailer Shuts Persian Gulf Stores Amid Boycott

KUWAIT/MANAMA (Dispatches) – French retail giant Carrefour has closed all its stores in Kuwait and Bahrain this week, marking the latest retreat by the supermarket chain from Persian Gulf markets amid intensified boycott campaigns linked to its association with Israel.

Carrefour suspended operations in Bahrain on September 14, shuttering seven stores, followed by a full exit from Kuwait announced on September 16. Both moves come amid mounting consumer activism in the region targeting companies perceived as complicit in Israel's ongoing military invasion of Gaza.

Majid Al Futtaim, the Dubai-based conglomerate that operates Carrefour under franchise rights in the Middle East, expressed thanks to customers but avoided giving clear reasons

for the closures. However, Arabic media and regional activists have attributed the withdrawals to sustained pressure from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and widespread grassroots campaigns.

Carrefour has been a prominent focus of BDS efforts since signing a controversial franchise agreement in 2022 with Israeli firms Electra Consumer Products and its subsidiary Yenot Bitan, companies known for operating in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The exits in Kuwait and Bahrain follow a pattern of similar withdrawals elsewhere in the region. In November 2024, Carrefour closed its stores in Jordan, reopening them under a local brand, HyperMax. Earlier this

year, the chain ended operations in Oman, while pro-Palestine activists forced the temporary closure of Carrefour's largest store in Tunisia's La Marsa.

While Carrefour and its local operators have generally avoided acknowledging political reasons for these closures, activists have hailed the developments as major victories for the boycott movement, demonstrating the power of consumer activism to hold corporations accountable for supporting or enabling Israel's policies in Gaza and the occupied territories.

Since the escalation of Israel's war on Gaza in 2023, boycott campaigns have gained momentum across Arab countries, with public opinion strongly favoring the avoidance of products linked to Israel or its allies. BDS

campaigners have also accused Carrefour of providing gifts to Israeli soldiers during the war.

Carrefour's withdrawals underscore the growing commercial and reputational risks multinational corporations face in the region amid ongoing Israeli aggression. The supermarket chain appears to be retreating from markets where boycott efforts have gained critical mass, signaling that sustained grassroots pressure can influence corporate behavior in support of Palestinian rights.

Meanwhile, Majid Al Futtaim is expanding its HyperMax brand across the region, a move seen by some as an attempt to distance from Carrefour's Israeli associations while maintaining a foothold in Persian Gulf retail markets.

U.S.-Mediated Israel-HTS Deal Deepens Syria's Fragmentation

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Israel has reportedly presented a sweeping security proposal to Syria's de facto rulers, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)—an Al-Qaeda-linked group that emerged as the only functioning authority after the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024.

The proposal, discussed in London this week, envisions a no-fly and demilitarized zone in southern Syria, extending Israeli military control over territory it has already occupied, while allowing its forces to remain indefinitely on Jabal al-Sheikh (Mount Hermon).

The talks, mediated by Washington, brought together Israeli strategic affairs minister Ron Dermer, HTS's foreign minister Asaad al-Shaibani, and U.S. envoy Tom Barrack.

The plan, reportedly modeled on the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace deal, demands expanded buffer zones, a total airspace ban near the border, and removal of Syrian heavy weapons.

In return, Israel offers only a limited, phased withdrawal—while vowing to remain in key strategic areas “for the foreseeable future, if not permanently,” according to senior Israeli officials.

Israel's deepening invasion and occupation of Syrian territory—under the pretext of “defense” following Assad's fall—has drawn widespread international condemnation.

The United Nations has denounced Israel's takeover of the UN-monitored buffer zone in the Golan Heights as a violation of the 1974 disengagement accord.

Nevertheless, Israeli leaders have openly signaled plans to so-

lidify their hold on Syrian land and build lasting influence by arming local minorities.

Tel Aviv has accelerated efforts to arm and fund Druze militias in Sweida following sectarian massacres in July 2025, which left over 2,000 dead, including hundreds of Druze civilians. It is also reportedly working to empower Kurdish factions in the north to fracture Syria's social fabric and hinder any unified national resistance to Israeli expansionism.

Meanwhile, HTS leader Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, long denounced for his group's brutality against Druze, Shias, and Alawites, has taken a controversial turn by seeking normalization with Israel. Despite Israel's occupation and aggression, Jolani has pushed for political dialogue with Tel Aviv—moves that many Syrians view as a betrayal of the country's sovereignty and dignity.

HTS's crimes—particularly in minority regions—have not only weakened Syria's internal unity but have also undermined any credible national front against Israel's widening presence.

By aligning with Western mediation and entertaining Israeli overtures, Jolani has drawn sharp criticism for legitimizing the Zionist regime at a time when it is expanding its military footprint and destabilizing Syria from within.

Though cloaked as a “security agreement,” Israel's real agenda appears to be the long-term fragmentation, occupation, and control of Syria, with local militias turned into proxies. As negotiations continue, the question remains: will Syria remain divided and weakened—or unite against a common occupier?

Qatari Emir Visits Jordan After Israeli Airstrike on Doha

AMMAN (Dispatches) -- Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani visited Amman on Wednesday for high-level talks with Jordan's King Abdullah II, marking the emir's first trip since a recent Israeli airstrike targeted a residential area in Doha.

The attack on September 9 killed six people and was condemned by the Qatari leadership as a “blatant, treacherous and cowardly” strike against Hamas leaders based in Qatar.

Upon arrival, Sheikh Tamim was warmly received by King Abdullah II, Crown Prince Hussein Abdullah, and senior Jordanian officials.

The visit comes just days after Qatar hosted an emergency summit of Arab and Islamic leaders, who united in condemning Israel's attack on Doha. At the summit, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) committed to “activating a joint defense mechanism,” signaling a move toward stronger regional military cooperation.

During their meetings at Basman Palace, the two leaders focused on enhancing military collaboration and coordinating responses to Israel's recent aggression ahead of the upcoming United Nations General Assembly. Discussions also covered broader regional stability, including

Syria and ways to deepen economic and investment ties between Jordan and Qatar.

King Abdullah II expressed Jordan's unwavering solidarity with Qatar, affirming support for all measures to preserve Qatar's sovereignty and territorial integrity in light of the Israeli strike. He praised Qatar's efforts in promoting peace and stability both regionally and internationally, emphasizing the importance of their close partnership.

In response, Sheikh Tamim reiterated Qatar's commitment to safeguarding its security and sovereignty against any form of aggression. Both leaders underscored the necessity of supporting the Palestinian people in achieving their legitimate national rights and highlighted the urgent need for political solutions to regional crises to ensure lasting security and stability.

Senior ministers and officials from both countries attended the talks, which began with a private exchange between King Abdullah and Sheikh Tamim to share views on various pressing issues. As a mark of respect and friendship, King Abdullah awarded Sheikh Tamim the Order of Al-Hussein bin Ali, Jordan's highest honor for heads of state, and hosted a luncheon banquet in his honor.

Mosul's Daesh-Destroyed Old City Fully Restored by UNESCO

MOSUL, Iraq (Dispatches) -- UNESCO has marked a significant milestone with the completion of a large-scale restoration project aimed at rebuilding Mosul's historic Old City, devastated during Daesh occupation from 2014 to 2019.

The campaign, dubbed “Revive the Spirit of Mosul,” has restored three major religious landmarks alongside 124 heritage houses, revitalizing the city's rich cultural and architectural heritage.

During Daesh's control, UNESCO estimates that nearly 80% of Mosul's historic town was destroyed. Following the terrorist group's defeat in 2019, the UN agency launched an ambitious reconstruction effort focused on three pillars: restoring significant heritage sites, promoting cultural life, and strengthening educational infrastructure.

Early this month, Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani officially inaugurated the restored Al-Nouri Mosque complex—in-

cluding the iconic Al-Hadba Minaret—Al-Saa'a Convent, and Al-Tahera Syrian Catholic Church, signaling the culmination of years of painstaking work.

These landmarks, severely damaged or destroyed during the conflict, have now been carefully reconstructed using a blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern conservation techniques.

The Al-Nouri Mosque, dating back to the 12th century and once central to Mosul's urban identity, was heavily damaged by explosives during Daesh's retreat in 2017.

Archaeological remains uncovered during restoration, including ancient ablution rooms, were integrated into the mosque's revival, led by an international team of experts.

Al-Tahera Church, nearly obliterated with collapsed roofs and damaged vaults, was meticulously rebuilt after removing thousands of fragments for reuse. Similarly, the Al-Saa'a

Convent, dating from 1866, was restored to include structural repairs and sustainability improvements such as solar panels.

Beyond monuments, the project restored 124 heritage homes in the Old City, enabling the return of approximately 170 families. These restorations involved not only architectural repair but also modern infrastructure upgrades including electrical wiring, drainage, and road surfacing.

The program was supported by fifteen countries and international organizations, with significant funding from the United Arab Emirates and the European Union, and prioritized collaboration with local residents and professionals.

In addition to physical restoration, UNESCO invested in Mosul's cultural and educational revival—renovating classrooms, supporting cultural festivals, establishing creative spaces for youth, and training over 2,800 workers in traditional restoration skills.