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Israeli activists plan protest in solidarity with Gaza return march

The Coalition of Women for Peace is calling on Israeli activists to join their solidarity protest near the border fence with Gaza on Saturday.

By Yael Marom



Palestinians protesting in Gaza during the start of the 'Great Return March.' March 30, 2017.

Despite the army's attempts to stoke fear among Israelis and Palestinians alike, a group of Israeli women will join the Palestinian protesters in Gaza on the other side of the border fence during the "Great Return March." The Coalition of Women for Peace is calling for demonstrators to rally on Saturday in the area near the Gaza border "to show support and solidarity with the residents of Gaza, to oppose violence against the protesters, to call for an end to the siege." Buses will leave from Tel Aviv. The organizers are inviting activists to join

them as way to challenge Israeli media's incitement against the Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza.

Tanya Rubinstein, coordinator of the Coalition of Women for Peace, said "the gap between what we're hearing from within Gaza about the events and the incitement that we're hearing in the Israeli media is massive and leaves no doubt about the violent intentions of the Israeli authorities. We hope that our fears of a violent military response will be proven wrong, but regardless we will show up on Saturday to support the demonstrators, who have the right to demand their rights and their freedom."

Aya Zinati, a feminist activist from the Coalition of Women for Peace said, "the right to return is the right of Palestinians everywhere, and we will continue to demand it. And it is very moving when it [the demand] is coming from Gaza, where people are suffering badly from the siege. For 11 years Israel has occupied them with internal problems like the electricity shortage and the Rafah crossing with the goal of dividing the Palestinians to keep them isolated. When there's such a protest in Gaza, it testifies to the fact that the Israeli siege's attempt to divide the Palestinians has not succeeded. And not only that: the Palestinians in Gaza still yearn for freedom. The right of return is part of that freedom for all of us Palestinians."

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Israeli forces fire tear gas at Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza during the beginning of the 'Great Return March.' March 30, 2018. (Oren Ziv/Activestills.org).

Over the past several days, the organizers of the “Great Return March” have stressed that the protest will be a peaceful one. Hamas has joined the organizers’ call to commit to peaceful protest and to prevent violence from distracting from the goals of the march. [In an interview with +972 Magazine](#), Hasan al-Kurd, one of the organizers of the march, said, “We’re reach out to them [Israelis], holding an olive branch. It’s true that we’ve suffered in the past but we’re willing to put everything behind us. Let’s turn over a new page together and do what’s right.”

Nevertheless, Israelis have refused to listen. Even before the march began Israeli security forces [launched a public campaign](#) painting the ‘Great Return March’ as a violent, Hamas-sponsored event. The Israeli army’s chief of staff announced the deployment of 100 snipers and several infantry brigades to the area of the Gaza border fence. [Israeli generals warned](#) that there will be casualties. The Israeli army personally threatened bus company owners and their families against transporting protesters to the border. “From my point of view,” [COGAT Gen. Yoav Mordechai told Al-Hura TV](#), “if bus companies you own take some of the protesters and bring them to the border, you and your families will be held personally responsible.”

The IDF is using aerial drones to drop tear gas on the protesters in Gaza, and, in addition to snipers, there are tanks deployed along the border. As part of its preparation for the march, the IDF declared the area near the border fence a closed military zone — the protesters from the Coalition of Women for Peace will likely face trouble when they arrive.

Yael Marom is Just Vision’s public engagement manager in Israel and a co-editor of Local Call, where this article was [originally published in Hebrew](#).

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