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The Free Gaza Song Contest – Music to Accompany a Courageous Boat Journey

(Mainz, August 20, 2008) While forty internationals sail with a boat from Cyprus to Gaza to take a stand (see www.freegaza.org), there is a song playing in the background: the Free Gaza Song. Whoever plays and submits this song can win in the Free Gaza Song Contest. All details at www.anis-online.de/office/events/FreeGazaSong.htm

Background: The Gaza Strip borders the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea and is regarded by Europe as an occupied territory, whereas Israel says that its troops have withdrawn, thus denying responsibility for the situation. The 1.5 million inhabitants of this densely populated coastal strip are being collectively punished for aggressions of individuals and of groups by means of a strict siege. Most of those aggressions, in turn, often have their origins in the dispossession of the Palestinians and in sixty years of injustice. The water quality in the Gaza Strip is catastrophic, and more than 200 people have died due to the lack of medical supplies. The economy has collapsed, the unemployment rate currently is the highest in the world, and the programmed disputes between the elected Hamas and Fatah, which is supported by many powerful countries in the world, further aggravate the situation for the civil population. Everybody, who happens to live in Gaza, is exposed to this fate that is far away from the Human Rights.

The "Free Gaza" and the "Liberty" sail on Gazan invitation from Cyprus without entering Israeli waters or Israeli ports. They bring with them 200 hearing-aids that are needed there, they release balloons as a sign for freedom and want to open the way for more boats. The reactions from Israel are contradictory: on the one hand, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently officially acknowledged the humanitarian character of this nonviolent action. On the other hand, the newspapers Haaretz and Jerusalem Post publish headlines that in part are rather threatening. It is all the same for the maritime Free Gaza group: they go to Gaza. More than 200 international organizations and personalities support them and millions are with them.

And where does the song contest come in? There is a guy who joined the web team of FreeGaza.org a year ago, namely songwriter Anis from Germany. He knows some of the boat participants personally, and on August 1, the Free Gaza Song occurred to him during a badminton game. The next day it was posted on YouTube at <http://de.youtube.com/watch?v=ATLNX8k8FU0>. The melody of the song is catchy and easy to sing and play, leaving enough space for individual interpretations. Thus the Free Gaza Song Contest came into being at the same time, for Anis says in his video message: "Maybe you have a band or another language or something else."

Prizes are, among other things, several sets of 12 "Before their Diaspora" pictures (29,5 cm x 42 cm), see www.anis-online.de/2/artclub/beforetheirdiaspora.htm, as well as sets of postcards of the same series, one DVD "The Sons of Eilaboun" by Hisham Zreiq and a DVD by filmmaker Osama Qashoo who is one of the boat participants. There were some first reactions on the song contest, among them a video response by members of the Free Gaza Movement, recorded in Cyprus (<http://de.youtube.com/watch?v=2mjwuvWHHG4>), a version of the musicians Angelika Wagener (Cello) and Ofer Golany (from Jerusalem), and a rock'n'roll punk version by Lars RO from Copenhagen.

Anis wrote two more songs for Free Gaza and meanwhile all three songs are recorded in a studio for good quality listening. On the verse: "You say it's all about a security risk / and you don't read no Chomsky, you don't read no Fisk / and I got Gaza on my mind and you tell me why.", professor Noam Chomsky wrote in an email: "Very glad to see the song, and very pleased to be linked with Fisk, particularly in an endeavor as courageous and necessary as this one."

All news of the Free Gaza Song Contest are published and collected at www.anis-online.de/office/events/FreeGazaSong.htm. The deadline will be announced there in due time. Contact is anis@anis-online.de