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Flotilla sets sail from Palermo to Palestine after heart-warming support from the mayor of Palermo

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The Freedom Flotilla Coalition arrived in Palermo on Monday July 16. There are four boats participating ? Al Awda, Freedom To Gaza, Falestine and Mairead - which aim to break the decade long Israeli naval blockade of Gaza.

So far, the Freedom Flotilla has stopped in ports in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and now Italy. The Flotilla will leave over the next two days for the final leg of the journey, which began in mid-May.

Around 40 activists from many nationalities will make the final voyage from Palermo to Gaza, leaving over the next few days. The journey is expected to take up to 10 days.

In eight years from 2008 through 2016, international activists have sailed 31 boats to challenge the Israeli naval blockade of Gaza. Mayor Orlando formally invited the coalition to base the Flotilla in Palermo to prepare for the final leg of future missions.

The Mayor of Palermo has renamed a section of the sea front in honour of famed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, to mark the arrival of the Freedom Flotilla in the Italian city.

Mayor Leoluca Orlando made the announcement overnight at a function at the Biblioteca comunale di Palermo, in the presence of Ambassador of the State of Palestine in Italy and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dr Mai Alkaila.

Mayor Orlando said the international community's silence on the oppression of Palestinians was a "time of terrible shame".

"I've decided to dedicate the sea front of Palermo to Yasser Arafat," he said.

"Freedom flotilla sails in support of, and solidarity with, all Palestinians of the Gaza strip. The announcement sets an example of solidarity and action for peace and justice for Palestine, something we hope will inspire more politicians to act" Ellen Hansson, spokesperson,

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