

## “We Do Not Fear Risk”: An interview with the Coordinator of Egypt’s Fleet of Steadfastness





As the Global Freedom Flotilla set sail to break the blockade on Gaza, a parallel initiative emerged in Egypt: the “Egyptian Fleet of Steadfastness,” launched by a group of young public activists. Leading the initiative is Khaled Bassiouny, the fleet’s general coordinator, who believes the effort is essential to represent the Egyptian people in what he describes as one of the most pressing humanitarian—before political—causes of our time.

In this interview with Noon Post, Bassiouny discusses the widespread grassroots support for the fleet, his expectations of receiving official approval, and the challenges the initiative has encountered. Notably, just two days after the interview was recorded, contact was abruptly lost with the owner of the boat Ibiza, which had been donated to the initiative.

This occurred less than 24 hours after the boat’s specifications were made public. Without a vessel, the fleet is effectively grounded, as it cannot receive sailing permits without a ship.

In a public statement, the initiative called on businesspeople and supporters to help purchase a new boat before September 28, in order to join the international flotilla. The call was also endorsed by the Civil Democratic Movement, but no response has been received thus far.

How did the idea for the Egyptian Fleet of Steadfastness come about?

This isn't a spontaneous idea. For the past two years of genocide and ethnic cleansing endured by our people in Palestine, we've felt that the Egyptian people must take action—a real, visible action. With the launch of the Maghreb fleet and the global flotilla, we asked: Why not have Egypt participate? Why not send ships that represent the Egyptian people, join the global movement, and do everything possible to break the blockade on Gaza?

You and most participants are young—referred to as the “Generation of Steadfastness.” What civic or political backgrounds qualify you for this role?

Most of us have been involved in public service for a long time. Palestine has always been a unifying cause—one everyone agrees on. We all believe in the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea. Some of us were members of political parties but have since resigned.

Others belonged to civil society organizations, but left those as well. So we're a group of independent young people not affiliated with any party or political group. Of course, we have different ideas and ideologies, but the fleet is not a platform for that, especially given the current state of Gaza.

What steps has the initiative taken so far to launch the fleet?

We sent registered letters to all relevant authorities from the Presidency and Prime Minister's office to the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs. We also opened channels for Egyptians to donate in-kind aid. At our main headquarters and at party offices across Cairo and other provinces, we received large quantities of donations.

There's been an overwhelming desire among Egyptians to contribute some brought whatever they could. One man, for example, came with a single bag of pasta. I believe he only had two at home, but he chose to donate one to the Palestinian people.

We also took practical steps: we contacted the ports of Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez to facilitate movement. We secured a boat that accommodates 34 passengers. All these actions were taken within a legal and constitutional framework to secure approval for the fleet's departure. The plan is for our vessels to join the larger flotilla, which includes ships from Tunisia, Morocco, Spain, Italy, and other countries.

You mentioned receiving a donated boat. What are its specs, and how prepared are you to operate it?

The boat was donated by a fisherman who reached out to us, pledging his full support regardless of whether we are stopped or receive formal approval. He will also provide the operating crew. The boat has space for 34 passengers and six

compartments for storing aid. We expect to officially receive it within days and will then release full details. For now, we’ve delayed the announcement until we complete aid collection.

Can you share any exclusive details with us?

We’ve received, for the first time, an official acknowledgment from the state confirming it has received our requests both from the Presidency and the Prime Minister’s office. For now, we prefer not to disclose any further information about the boat until the formal announcement.

Ports require permits and customs clearance. Are you receiving help with these procedures?

Yes. We formed a legal committee that includes members of the Egyptian Bar Association and a representative from the Helwan Bar Association. This committee is handling all procedural and legal matters related to the ports. In the coming days, we’ll submit a list of over 34 volunteers to the coast guard to join the sailing crew.

There are legal risks, both domestically and internationally. How will you handle them?

The biggest concern is the possibility of an attack or arrests by the Israeli occupation. We are undergoing legal training from international bodies including the United Nations who also trained participants in the global flotilla.

We’ve already received legal documents that we’re currently translating and studying in accordance with international law. We’ve also asked the Red Crescent to organize training in first aid and international relief operations.

We hope no obstacles arise and that the fleet succeeds in breaking the blockade. But if danger comes, every participant is fully aware and ready to risk their life. After two years of genocide, no one here fears the risks.

Why did you reject financial donations?

We declined monetary donations to avoid legal complications, as fundraising requires a licensed legal entity. We also wanted people to participate tangibly—by coming to our headquarters, meeting us, and engaging personally, rather than through faceless transactions.

How do you ensure that aid donations meet international standards, such as those of the Red Cross?

We set clear criteria: items must have at least six months of shelf life. We also published lists of required medications and basic supplies for Gaza, to ensure that all aid is useful and meets international and humanitarian organization



standards.

Do you have a maritime transport plan? From which port will you depart? Will there be international logistical support at sea?

It’s too early to share those details, but we’re in constant contact with the international flotilla and hold regular virtual meetings. We’ve asked them to share their expertise, including documents related to past missions like Maddalena and Handala. Right now, our priority is finalizing legal procedures and sorting the donations.

How much aid have you received so far?

The volume is enormous, but we can’t give a specific number until the sorting is complete. We’ve received large amounts from Alexandria, Dakahlia, and through party offices. We’ll issue a detailed statement once the count is finalized. What’s clear is that we were not expecting this level of public support. Despite some efforts to restrict us, citizens insisted on contributing—many even offered to hand over donations in the street. It’s a true reflection of the people’s spirit.

How do you assess the official government position so far?

There’s no clear stance—no approval, no rejection, and not even a statement of reservation. But we don’t believe the Egyptian state would refuse participation, especially given the current threats facing Egypt. It would be only natural to allow Egypt to join a flotilla that includes volunteers from 54 countries. As of now, neither I nor the coordinating team expect a rejection.

Why did you involve political parties and institutions?

We wanted the initiative to be open to everyone—individuals, parties from both the government and opposition, and civil society groups. We reached out to Al-Azhar, the Coptic Church, and all professional unions because we want this to represent the Egyptian people in all their diversity. Even the head of the Farmers’ Syndicate visited our headquarters and recorded a statement of support. We’re committed to including political parties, unions, charitable, and civic organizations to form a broad-based representation of Egypt.

What level of volunteer participation have you seen?

More than 1,500 people have signed up, including over 100 sailors and more than 50 ship mechanics and technicians. The number of volunteers who show up daily is immense. We’re still working on a fair mechanism for selecting who will board. Egyptians genuinely want to take part.

Is the primary goal to break the blockade, or is it more of a symbolic and political message?

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It’s both. Symbolic and political, yes—but the primary and most urgent goal is to break the blockade on Gaza, which has now lasted for two years by land, sea, and air.

What would success look like? And when do you hope to launch?

We’re looking at a matter of days—we hope to depart in late September to rendezvous with the international flotilla at sea. Success, for us, is the popular participation: when women in Alexandria cry outside our headquarters, pleading to help, or when someone donates a strip of medicine they might need themselves. These moments, even if the fleet never sails, are already victories. They answer the question people have been asking for months: Where is Egypt? And the people reply: Here is Egypt.

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