

Syrian Aid Convoy Sets Off to Gaza Carrying 150 Tons of Foodstuffs

The 27th aid convoy presented from the people of Syria to the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip set off on Monday, consisting of 7 large trucks carrying around 150 tons of foodstuffs, cleaning materials and clothing.

Head of the Syrian Arab Popular Committee for Supporting the Palestinian People and Resisting the Zionist Project, Ahmad Abdelkarim, said this convoy is a gift to the besieged Palestinian people in Gaza on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year, adding that it aims to relieve the suffering and pain caused by continuing Israeli hostility.

The convoy contains foodstuffs such as rice, grits, rice, tea, grains, lentils, and chickpeas, in addition to cleaning materials and clothing. The convoy will head to Amman, Jordan, where it will be unloaded and transported by vehicles of the Jordanian



Hashemite Charity Agency. The Syrian Arab Popular Committee has been sending aid convoys to the Palestinian people each three months. This convoy, the last for 2009, joined a larger convoy or-

ganised by VIVA Palestina, a Palestinian solidarity organisation, headed by independent British MP, George Galloway. So far the group, which left the UK on 6 December, have visited nine countries and

will leave Damascus today for Jordan, before crossing into Egypt in the hope of accessing the Gaza Strip through the famous Rafah border crossing.

More details and the convoy's full route on pages 14-15.

Wealthy Arab states must help their neighbours

Oil-rich Arab states should devote more money to creating jobs and boosting food security among their poorer Arab neighbours to help the region meet development goals by 2015, a U.N. report issued on Sunday said.

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Though rich in labour and fertile land, much of the Arab world is plagued by malnutrition, joblessness and a big gap between rich and poor, said the report, published

by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Without more help from Gulf Arab countries, nations such as Yemen, Sudan and Somalia risk missing goals set for the UN Millennium Campaign, which aims to halve extreme poverty and boost life expectancy by 2015, it added.

"The development paralysis experienced by LDCs (least developed countries) in the Arab region can be turned around," the report said. "However, such a transformation requires a developmental compact

between the Arab LDCs and their more fortunate brothers."

In most Arab countries more than half of unemployed people are young, making the region's jobless rates among young people the highest in the world. The region needs to create 51 million new jobs by 2020 merely to keep unemployment from rising above its current levels, the report said.

The two-volume report, entitled 'Development Challenges for the Arab Region', called on oil-rich Gulf Arab countries to employ more mi-

grant workers from neighbouring states such as Yemen and to invest more in sectors that create jobs throughout the region.

In spite of progress towards self-sufficiency in grain production in Sudan and Syria, malnutrition is still rampant among Arab states and has seen little improvement since 1990. Poverty rates have not declined in the Arab world in nearly two decades, the report said, adding that nearly 140 million Arabs continue to live under the upper poverty line.