



World Organization of the Scout Movement  
Avenue de la Porte de Hal 38  
B-1060 Brussels Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 534 33 15  
Fax: +32 2 706 52 67

## THE PEACE SAILORS MAKE AN ABOUT-TURN OFF GAZA

**Anchored since 0800 hours this morning at the meeting point proposed to and accepted by the Cabinet of President Yasser Arafat yesterday, the *Peace Cruise* ship made an about-turn off the Gaza coast soon after 1600 hrs. Negotiations had to be reinitiated around 1330 when the Palestinian representatives asked to welcome the ship inside their fishing zone, a request which went beyond the agreement made with the Israeli Government and beyond what the *Peace Cruise* representative was able to offer in negotiation. Although the *Peace Sailors* did not disembark, this operation carried out by the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) sets a precedent that leaves open the possibility for other ships to approach Palestinian waters.**

In Gaza today a last-ditch attempt to negotiate a solution to the disembarkation of the *Peace Sailors* took place between the Palestinian Security Services and the *Peace Cruise* Project Manager. The meeting point proposed yesterday to President Arafat's Cabinet was at N 31° 35' 43" E 34° 27' 22" on the Palestinian side of the contact line, within the restrictive zone situated between Israeli and Palestinian waters.

The Palestinian representatives called on the ship to cross this line and to enter Palestinian waters to a distance of around 150 metres to the south, so that the boat would be clearly and symbolically lying in Palestinian waters. This solution, so politically desirable for the Palestinians, went beyond the proposal accepted a few days ago by the Israeli Government for the *Peace Sailors* to disembark on the contact line.

*The Peace Cruise* Project Manager then proposed that the ship could anchor at the meeting point, on the contact line, and position itself facing Gaza, thus straddling the contact line and Palestinian waters, so that the *Peace Sailors* could disembark on the Palestinian side. However, it appeared that this proposal was insufficient for the representatives of the Palestinian Authority.

Around eighty metres were the focus of the negotiations that the Palestinian representatives and the *Peace Cruise* Project Manager reluctantly abandoned at 1600 hrs, even though a crowd of some three thousand people were waiting for the arrival of the *Peace Sailors* in the port of Gaza.

And for the Peace Sailors? They set sail for Cyprus, taking with them the image of the Gaza coastline that they had been gazing towards since that morning, full of hope that they would be able to meet Palestinian young people.

ENDS