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## Israeli Court Prolongs Detention of Flotilla Activists, Including Two Australians

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An Israeli court has extended the detention of 21 activists, including Australians Robert Martin and Tania Safi, seized by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) on July 27, 2025, while attempting to deliver aid to Gaza aboard the Handala. The ruling, pending deportation, has sparked debate over Israel's naval blockade and the Australian government's response, with critics slamming its inaction.

The Handala, operated by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC), was intercepted 100km west of Gaza in international waters, carrying humanitarian supplies like food and medical goods. The group, including two European parliamentarians and Al Jazeera journalists, aimed to break Israel's blockade, which has restricted aid since Hamas's 2007 takeover. The Israeli court, on July 29, upheld the detention, citing the blockade's legality under

Israeli law. Lawyer Suhad Bishara of Adalah told ABC News, “The blockade is illegal under international law, and detaining these activists violates their rights”. The activists, now on a hunger strike, face deportation proceedings at Ramle detention center.

Israel defends the blockade as essential to prevent weapons smuggling to Hamas, a designated terrorist group responsible for the October 7, 2023, attack killing 1,200 people. The IDF insists the interception was lawful, with passengers safely escorted to Ashdod port. However, the FFC argues the seizure, conducted in international waters, breaches maritime law, a claim echoed by UN rapporteur Francesca Albanese on X, who called the detentions “arbitrary”. The operation follows a June incident where activist Greta Thunberg was deported after a similar flotilla attempt.

In Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) confirmed it is liaising with Israeli authorities but offered no firm action, drawing criticism. “The Labor government’s weak response abandons our citizens,” said Liberal Senator James Paterson, urging sanctions against Israel’s actions. Community frustration grows, with posts on X from users like @musmus84 demanding that DFAT protect Martin and Safi. As Gaza faces a humanitarian crisis, with 58,000 reported deaths per Hamas-run health authorities, the detentions highlight tensions over aid access and Australia’s diplomatic resolve.