



Libya: 'We do not allow occupiers into our country'

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"Israel does not exist as a country, it is Palestine, and we do not allow occupiers into our country," was the explanation a special representative of the Libyan government gave the nine-person group of a peace mission for barring their entrance into the country Wednesday morning.

The group, which includes three Israelis, was camped out in the no-man's land between Egypt and Libya after failing to gain entrance to the latter country late Tuesday night.

Latif Yahia, the Iraqi participant who was once a double for the son of Saddam Hussein, Uday, and who functioned as the group's spokesman at the border, was unsuccessful in his effort to persuade the Libyan official to allow them entry.

The group had voted to stay the night at the border and see if diplomacy and their message of good will to all people would gain them admittance Wednesday into the nation which has until now barred Israeli visitors. They have already decided that the group would stick together, even if the Israeli contingent was barred passage into Libya.

Throughout the trek the group had been aware that the goal of ending their journey in Libya hinged on the good graces of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who was aware of the group's intentions to travel to Tripoli.

A statement released by Breaking the Ice, prior to the official Libyan rejection of entry, said that participants were still hopeful they would continue their trip in Libya as scheduled, and arrive in Tripoli to plant an olive tree from Jerusalem, which they are carrying with them.

"We have decided to camp at the border and make our appeal again in the morning to ensure the highest officials will have the ability to make the decision," the statement said.

The near month-long journey took participants hailing from Israel, the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, Iraq, the United States, Iran, and Russia across deserts in Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Libya.

The Peres Center was assisting in the group's Israeli activities.

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