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In cooperation with "No Harbour for Genocide".

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The Material and Economic Power of the Organised, Internationalist Action of the Unions, and the Impact of the Strike

Defence companies, states and shipping companies will keep trying to evade the blockades, moving cargo through other ports and other routes, repressing those resisting or erasing labour altogether. But workers' power, from across the Mediterranean to Northern Europe to South Asia, presents a formidable challenge to the economy of war.

With this second International Day of Action and Struggle dockworkers set a historic record: On 30 October, more than 50 ports worldwide will take action. The entire stretch between southern France and Piraeus, nearly 1,100 nautical miles of coast, three and a half days of sailing for a container ship, will be essentially shut off to container traffic. The ports taking part in the 24-hour strike represent 74% of that coastline's container capacity. 4.4 million containers per month are currently moved by the ports of the unions' initiative Dockworkers Don't Work for War, and 3 million of that is in the Med.

That is 40% of all container activity in the entire Mediterranean. This international initiative of the unions includes some of the biggest transshipment hubs: Tangier, Piraeus, Gioia Tauro and Genoa: these are where very large vessels drop off containers to be picked up by smaller vessels to the rest of the ports around the Med. Should Spain join, the share of Mediterranean container port capacity covered by the mobilisation would rise from 40% to over 58% of the Med's total.

The strike will halt 40,000 containers for one day (accounting for 24H strikes in Greece, Italy, France and Basque, as well as a 2H strike in Tangier). At the UN standard of roughly $54,000 of goods per container, over two billion dollars of cargo will sit idle on the 30th of October.

A day of delay costs, on the standard estimate, up to two percent of a cargo's value, so the day alone is up to $43 million. And this is before counting the next day's delays and the cost of the Italian general strike.

Dockworkers' Action against Militarization of the Ports

Dockworkers do not accept the militarization of their ports and societies as the new norm. Through their unions and their organised action, they are achieving results.

In November 2024, workers in Tangier delayed hundreds of tons of weapons cargo going to Israel, including bombs, by more than two months. Piraeus's dockworkers have effectively blocked weapons shipments in June 2024, October 2024, July 2025 and March 2026. Dockers at Marseille blocked 14 tons of ammunition links for IMI Systems, while workers in Le Havre refused 18 tonnes of cannon barrels for Elbit in December 2025. Dockworkers in Genoa blocked a military vessel bound for Saudi Arabia as early as 2019, and since June 2025 they have used targeted strikes to refuse the loading and unloading of at least four arms-trade vessels (1,2,3,4). In fact, their record is such that in July 2025 it was enough for COSCO, the same group that ENEDEP dockworkers in Piraeus have been fighting for years for a collective agreement, for health and safety and for their rights, to cancel a Genoa call and return three containers of military cargo to Singapore before anyone stopped working.

In September 2025, Livorno dockworkers began stopping shipments of war material. Starting with the general strike of 22 September, their picket kept the US-flagged SLNC Severn, carrying cargo for the US base at Camp Darby, from docking at the port.

And in February 2026 dockworkers in more than twenty ports across seven countries took part in the first International Day of Action and Struggle and stopped five suspect ships on a single day. International coordination of workers and their unions brings material results.

In March this year, mobilisation across Spain, Greece, Türkiye and Italy led to 23 containers of Indian military steel being seized. The cargo was identified, and coordinated action led to three MSC vessels being denied harbour in Spain, refused unloading in Greece, and kept away from Türkiye, until the cargo could be seized in Italy, where those containers are still held today. This steel was enough to produce, according to NHG's accounts, thirteen thousand 155mm shells, the shells Israel's military fires into Gaza.

And across these cases, the dockworkers took on the interests of corporations and the war plans of their own governments, actually stopping cargo used in war crimes.

The Response of States and Corporations: Intensified Repression and Exploitation

When workers show their power at a port, states and corporations respond. French, Italian and Greek struggles have stopped vessels, containers, weapons and sometime even routes.

And instead of regular shipping lines, private ammunition ships, chartered by Israel, now load for Elbit in Nhava Sheva to avoid the port action that led to the seizing of the 23 containers.

We have also seen the port of Lisbon used to bypass the Spanish arms embargo on Israel: in April 2026, a consignment of aerospace materials travelled by road from Castellón in Spain to Lisbon, and from there onward to Elbit Systems. And then there is another response: not evasion but state repression: In Morocco, eight dockworkers were made to resign after protesting an F-35-parts call at Tanger Med. In Sweden, the same day the Labour Court ruled the dockers' boycott lawful, the union's deputy chair was fired, on 'national security' grounds.

In Greece, the president of ENEDEP dockers' union faces prosecution by the state that serves corporations for stopping ammunition;

And Italian unions carry big fines and court actions while Genova dockers have been prosecuted for their stoppage in 2019.

In every case, the repression comes from the states and corporations of each country, the very governments that claim to have nothing to do with the war.

Dockworkers face not only state repression but also the intensification of capitalist exploitation itself. Automation and artificial intelligence could make work safer and reduce working time. In the hands of business groups, however, they become tools for maximising profit through job cuts, speed-ups, flexible shifts, and electronic surveillance of the worker's every move. Tellingly, in the US, 3,300 to 3,900 dock jobs are expected to disappear by 2027 because of automation.

The genocide is still going on

One year ago, the “ceasefire” imposed by the US on Gaza came into force. Yet the ceasefire is in name only, as the occupation, the settlements and the genocide of the Palestinian people continue. 1,400 people were confirmed killed during this time, with many more still buried beneath the rubble. The Palestinian people, in Gaza and the West Bank, are still being relentlessly bombed, displaced and starved by the occupation army of the murderous state of Israel.

And in that same year, every single month of it, our ports kept supplying the fronts of the imperialist war. In the last 14 months alone, No Harbour for Genocide (NHG) has tracked 315 shipments of components for Elbit Systems, Israel's largest arms manufacturer, moving through 56 commercial ports, in 29 countries, from Germany to India, Brazil to Egypt, Australia to Vietnam.

In the last 10 months, NHG also tracked 3,400 shipments of US military cargo through 67 ports in 42 countries.

This is the most up-to-date and comprehensive mapping of the militarisation of ports and public infrastructure through which these shipments are moved. Even this map, however, only counts the minimum confirmed shipments. The real number is much higher.

While the ceasefire was being violated daily, a new war started: on 28 February, the US and Israel attacked Iran. The day the Straits of Hormuz was closed, the price of gas in Europe jumped almost 40 percent in a single day. Eight major oil companies made more than $90 billion in just three months as the war drove energy prices higher. Against the backdrop of the rivalry between the US and the EU on one side and China and Russia on the other, business groups are profiting from the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, while workers pay the bills. And some pay with their lives: 24 seafarers have been killed, and twenty thousand seafarers have been stranded since February. Meanwhile, the shipowners collect a million dollars a day for a single trip and their war freight has set off the biggest ship-ordering spree in twenty-five years: the same owners who ration one meal a day to stranded crews have placed twenty billion dollars of orders for new ships.

Militarization of the Ports

From planes to tanks, guns to bullets, explosives to ammunition, uniforms to boots, our ports have become replenishing and forwarding bases for war and genocide. This is not metaphorical. Just after the US–Israeli war on Iran started, the ports of Antwerp, Civitavecchia, Piraeus, Bremerhaven, Rotterdam saw an increase of up to 1,000% in cargo supplying US military bases. The port of Antwerp-Bruges, which increased from 200 to 2,000 tonnes a month, supplies Ramstein, the US air base in Germany that then airlifts the cargo into the Gulf bases sustaining the frontline of imperialist war. And this June, the same port reserved 250 million euros and 120,000 square metres of its port for NATO tanks and ammunition containers to be activated within 30 days of a mobilisation signal. Bremerhaven moved 112 US-military shipments, mostly onward toward Poland feeding the Ukraine front, and Germany is now building in that same port a NATO deployment hub, with €1.35 billion, for what its minister calls 'tens of thousands of soldiers on the way to the eastern flank.'

Militarization of Civilian Infrastructure

This is part of a broader trend to build our ports, our roads and rails into the war machine. The EU has already allocated €1.7 billion of its transport budget to 95 "military mobility" projects in 21 states, with €17.65 billion more proposed in the next budget. Bridges are strengthened for heavier loads, motorways are built to military width, ports are deepened for the war fleets. The war economy does not sit beside our lives. It is being literally laid into them. Weapons are moved on roads that we use to drop our children to school, the rail routes that go through our communities, and the airports we travel from. Public infrastructures are transformed into the arteries of war. And these arteries pass through our cities. Over the last fourteen months, NHG has tracked at least thirteen shipments of gunpowder propellant through the port of Thessaloniki to Israel's arms industry.

Workers load and unload hazardous cargo in civilian ports where passengers pass unaware. Workers put themselves on the line for cargo that kills others, and the cargo puts their cities on the map of a war that is not theirs.

Militarization of Industry

Industry is also being converted to serve the aims of the war economy. Volkswagen's car plant in Osnabrück is being reconverted into a defence plant: air-defence components will be built together with Israel's Rafael, the maker of Iron Dome's interceptors. Of the plant's 1,800 auto workers, a fifth is being cut. The rest keep a future, on the condition they build weapons instead of cars.

This is the choice they now offer the working class: your job or your conscience. We say both: secure work without war.

Capitalists turn to war economy because that is where the higher profits are. Factories that meet people's needs are shut down as soon as they stop being profitable enough, like Electrolux in Italy, which will lay off 1,250 workers. Under capitalism, the criterion for whether a factory makes cars, fridges or shells is profit, not people's needs. From a dry dock in Taranto, where Italy's largest steel plant was just ordered to shut down, the Italian Government sent an aircraft carrier to Indonesia for free, likely to secure 10 billion dollars in oilfields that Italian company Eni is developing there. The Indonesian people have been tirelessly protesting the militarization of their society. This is not a matter of the wrong priorities of some governments. Securing profits and the spoils of war for corporations is at the heart of the policy of all governments, and workers pay for it through intensified exploitation, soaring prices and anti-people taxation.

The Organised Action of the Working Class and the People Is the Only Real Force of Solidarity with the Peoples

The organised action of workers and the people is needed everywhere, because no government, whether liberal or social democratic, defends the rights of the people. Some openly support the US–Israeli wars. Others proclaim, in words, their solidarity with the Palestinian people. Their declarations differ, but their policy is determined by the same criterion: the profits of each country's corporations, in peace and in war. That is why their verbal condemnations and their embargoes do not stop the war. They breed illusions among the people and provide cover for business that carries on as usual. The examples of Türkiye and Spain show this clearly.

The oil terminal of Ceyhan in Türkiye has supplied forty percent of Israel's crude oil, the country's single largest source, feeding straight into the refineries that hold contracts to supply diesel and jet fuel to the Israeli military. After the Turkish state announced its embargo of all cargo to Israel in May 2024, fifty-seven ghost shipments left the port of Ceyhan for Israel, which equals some forty-seven million barrels. The government of Türkiye has denied these shipments at least three times despite satellite imagery and AIS tracking data confirming them.

And despite its ban on weapons to Israel, Spain has allowed ships carrying military cargo to Elbit Systems to dock at its ports 25 times in the last 14 months, according to NHG data.

The People's Role and Stake in the Action

But this fight is not merely a dockworker's issue. It's a matter for the whole people and the youth. The working class and the people, living through brutal austerity, a cost-of-living crisis, a housing crisis, anti-migrant violence, the commercialization of health and education, unemployment and starvation wages, are footing the bills of the war, while the shipping companies, the banks, the weapons manufacturers and the oil and gas companies make billions in profits.

Italy is drawing up to €14.9 billion for the EU's war plans while leaving €12.8 billion for health unspent, showing that war preparation is the priority, at the expense of people's needs. Greece spends €6.9 billion on the needs of US–NATO–EU war plans, up 15.4%, the highest in twenty-five years, while four hundred of its one thousand operating rooms stand closed.

The EU, which has escape clauses from its budget rules when it comes to armaments, says “there is no money” when it comes to health, education and wages. This is not a “management failure” that a “better clause” can fix. It shows what the EU is, a union serving capital, its rivalries and its wars.

The working class and the popular strata have every interest in opposing the wars and in organising their struggle against the policy of exploitation and profit that gives rise to them. The dockworkers have shown us the way. It is up to all of us to follow it! No involvement in the wars of the US, NATO and the EU! Money for wages, collective agreements, health and education!

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