

Indian cruise ship crew stage second protest in three days

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Last Wednesday, 650 Indian cruise ship workers on Marella Cruises' Explorer staged a demonstration on the upper deck of the ship ported off the coast of the UK, protesting conditions in which they have been held captive for over three months without a clear plan by their employer or their government for repatriation.

Since the cruise industry closed its doors to incoming customers on March 13 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, there have been thousands of ship workers who face similar conditions. The *Miami Herald* reported Sunday that "at least 42,000 workers remain trapped on cruise ships without paychecks, and some still are suffering from COVID-19, three months after the industry shut down."

Yesterday, another group of Indian workers on the Cruise & Maritime Voyages' (CMV) MV Astoria staged a similar protest, submitting a Facebook video to the cruise crew advocacy news source Crew-Center.com. Although the Crew-Center report described the event as a "hunger strike," crew members participating in the strike declined to comment to the WSWS to confirm.

A protesting worker addressed video viewers, explaining, "We are crew from CMV Cruises' Astoria, and we've been stranded here for three months. We are all just waiting to go home —we haven't had any updates on when we are going home. The company is trying their best, but we haven't had any updates from the Indian Embassy. Please Indian Embassy, help us, we are in need." Another crew member made an appeal to the Indian government. "We request you to help us, and help our company to repatriate us. Our families need us."

In an expression of the sheer anger and desperation felt by these workers, a protestor displayed a sign that read, "Enough is enough," and "Frustrated—What next?"

Suicide?"

The latter was an obvious reference to the eight non-COVID-19-related deaths and one suicide attempt occurring on stranded cruise ships since early May. Two cruise ship crew members were reported to have been found hanged in their cabins, two reportedly died from jumping overboard, and four more had unclear causes of death, but that are widely suspected to have been suicides.

On Saturday, a recently repatriated Mauritian citizen arriving to a 15-day quarantine facility posted a video to a Facebook group for Mauritian seafarers that was subsequently shared 500 times in several minutes. The viral video documented the filthy conditions of the accommodations which the Mauritian government had imposed upon its returning citizens at a cost of \$1,300 per person, as the WSWS had previously reported. Several similar social media posts followed along with an outpouring of anger over dirty floors, dusty tables and furniture, and closets in which the floors were covered with dead insects.

Cruise ship workers must not place any faith in the governments in their home countries, nor in the corporations which employ them. Instead, international seafarers must form independent rank-and-file committees across all ships and fleets to coordinate the widest possible action in defense of workers' rights to repatriation, safe and healthy quarantine measures at no cost to the employees, and financial compensation for lost wages due to the coronavirus pandemic. These committees must act in conjunction with similar organs of struggles on land in all countries and industries to fight for a global socialist economy.



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