

Rail Action Committee appeal to German railway workers: Stop the military transports! No weapons for the war in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza!

Rail Action Committee
16 February 2024

Dear colleagues,

We call on all of you to take action against the increasing transport of weapons by Deutsche Bahn and other railway companies.

We are noticing a sharp increase in the transport of goods for military purposes. The clients—the German government and the arms companies—are trying to conceal the transport of weapons and military goods by failing to declare or falsely declaring the cargo on trains and wagons. But among us railway workers, these are open secrets—we will not be taken for fools.

The increase in such transports is the result of the insane pro-war policy of the coalition government of the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Liberal Democrats (FDP). So far, they have spent €28 billion supporting the war in Ukraine, in which hundreds of thousands of mainly young men on both sides are falling victim. In the largest NATO manoeuvres since the Cold War, *Steadfast Defender*, 90,000 soldiers from 32 countries are currently gaming a war against Russia.

At the same time, the government is supporting Israel's genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. It is suppressing protests against this and backing the radical right-wing Netanyahu regime politically and militarily. Arms exports from Germany to Israel have increased more than tenfold from around €30 million to over €300 million within a very short space of time. In addition, Germany supplies weapons and ammunition to Israel free of charge.

The German ruling class is continuing its imperialist traditions and is once again seeking a leading role in the expanding war for the redivision of the world. In

the meantime, they are discussing increasing the next “special fund” for the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) to €300 billion and even the procurement of German nuclear weapons is no longer a taboo.

This madness must be stopped. As railway workers, we do not want to be accomplices to the genocide in Gaza and the cold-blooded slaughter of young soldiers in Ukraine. We want to prevent a third world war!

But to do so, we must organise ourselves independently. The rail unions—EVG and GDL—fully support this war and the support for genocide in Gaza by the German government. Only last week, the IG Metall, Germany's largest industrial union, presented a joint position paper with the SPD and the arms industry, the Federal Association of the German Security and Defence Industry (BDSV), on the remilitarisation of Germany.

During contract bargaining in the summer, the EVG imposed a massive loss of real wages on us workers in order to collect the money needed for the horrendous armaments programme. Now the GDL is planning to do the same in the current bargaining round. They are working very closely with the government to finance the insane pro-war policy on our backs.

As before the First and Second World Wars, the trade unions are completely subordinated to the capitalist state. The forerunner of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), the General German Trade Union Confederation (ADGB), even called on workers to march under the swastika flag on May 1, 1933.

This was the only way the Nazis could use the Deutsche Reichsbahn (railways) as a “fourth weapon”

for their crimes. It is estimated that more than three million Jews from all over Europe were transported to the extermination camps on Deutsche Reichsbahn trains, ultimately in cattle wagons. Hitler's Wehrmacht (Armed Forces) conduct of the wars of aggression would not have been possible without the Reichsbahn. The preparations for the attack on the Soviet Union are considered the largest "railway march" in history.

The railway workers who resisted were persecuted and murdered. This included 154 railwaymen who were sentenced to death and executed for their resistance, 135 who died in concentration camps or penitentiaries, and 1,438 who were sentenced to concentration camps or prison.

This must not happen again. But this requires the mobilisation of workers independently of the trade unions. We can only defend our wages and stop the war madness if we set up independent rank-and-file action committees.

While the vast majority of workers oppose the massive spending on armaments and genocide in Gaza, these crimes are supported by the trade unions. The trade union bureaucrats have reacted with hostility to the call to refuse to build or transport weapons for Israel which Palestinian trade unions addressed to trade unions around the world on October 16, 2023. Only a few, such as an alliance of Belgian airport unions and a union of dockworkers in the port of Barcelona, refused at short notice to handle or load weapons for Israel.

These courageous actions must be expanded and coordinated internationally. We know that with our call against war and genocide, and consequently for a stop to the production and transport of war equipment, weapons and ammunition, we are speaking for the majority of our colleagues and for the majority of working people as a whole.

We therefore appeal to all employees of Deutsche Bahn and other railway companies, to our colleagues in the airports and seaports:

- Stop the military transports!

We call on the workers in the armaments factories:

- Stop the production of weapons and ammunition!

The claim that they are used for defence is a vile lie. Weapons and ammunition produced in Germany kill people, soldiers and civilians alike. The mass murder of women and children in Gaza is not self-defence. The senseless slaughter on the Ukrainian-Russian front does

not serve the defence of Ukraine, but the defeat and division of Russia.

A changed situation requires changed forms of organisation. The trade unions are in favour of wage cuts and job losses. They support war and genocide. The greater the crisis, the closer the trade unions move towards the ruling class.

In a world of transnational corporations and a global war development, due to their national roots and orientation, the union bureaucracies are the main obstacle to the unification of workers across all national borders.

What is needed is a form of organisation that declares war on the joint front of the government, corporations and trade unions, which opposes capitalism and the nation state and unites workers from all sectors worldwide and coordinates their struggles. This is what we at the Rail Action Committee stand for as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

Get in touch with us:

- Document or note down the military transports that you come across in your work. We want to make the extent of the militarisation of society known!
- Join the Rail Action Committee and build it up as the organisation that consistently represents the interests of the workers and not those of the government and the capitalists!
- Build up the Action Committee as an organisation that aims to unite workers internationally against war and genocide!
- Get in touch either by Whatsapp message to the following number: +491633378340 or via the following form!



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact