

Protests against trade with Israel grow in Turkish ports

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The entry into Turkish ports of ships belonging to ZIM Integrated Shipping Services, Israel's largest shipping company, sparked protests in Istanbul, Mersin and Kocaeli.

Through its important role in Israel's foreign trade, ZIM fuels the Zionist regime's war machine and plays a crucial role in perpetuating the occupation and genocide in Palestine. Eli Glickman, CEO of ZIM, stated that the company supports Israel's operations in Gaza and announced in October 2023 that it had offered to bring all its ships and infrastructure facilities into use for Israel.

A mass protest was organised on Sunday after reports that the ship MV Kathrin, which docked at Haydarpaşa Port in Istanbul's Üsküdar district, has been carrying ammunition to Israel. Five of the youths who boarded the German-flagged ship were detained, while the ship was allowed to leave the port.

On October 1, the state-owned Anadolu Agency reported that "Amnesty International has called on Slovenia and Montenegro not to allow the ship 'MV Kathrin'... carrying explosives to Israel to dock in their ports and not to facilitate the transfer of weapons to Israel."

Another port protest took place in Mersin at the end of this October. Journalist Metin Cihan reported that ZIM ships were in the port of Mersin, using videos posted by the pro-Palestinian account 'Direni? Çad?r?' (Resistance Tent) on the X/Twitter platform. Cihan had previously revealed that trade between Turkey and Israel continued despite President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's condemnation of the genocide.

"I have found new evidence that trade with Israel is continuing," Cihan said: "I found that a container loaded from the Israeli port of Haifa on 9 October arrived at Mersin port on 17 October and was unloaded."

After this revelation, the anti-genocide demonstrators who came with banners to the entrance of the port of

Mersin to protest against the ZIM ship were not allowed to protest and the demonstrators were dispersed by port security.

On the evening of October 31, when a ZIM ship was seen at the Ambarlı port in Beylikdüzü, Istanbul, anti-genocide activists staged a protest. During the demonstration, a truck carrying ZIM containers was stopped and port security fired shots in the air. The stamp of the container being transported was recorded by a demonstrator during the protest which read, "Israel, Haifa."

(The X posting reads: Security forces open fire in the air as they try to prevent protesters from entering the port of Ambarlı in Istanbul.)

The same ship later docked at Kocaeli Diliskelesi port, which was also the target of protests. In a post on the "Direni? Çad?r?" X/Twitter account, it was reported that those protesting the arrival of the ZIM ship at the port were blocked by the police.

According to the *Ses Kocaeli* newspaper, the crowd, chanting slogans such as "Turkey's ports should be closed to Israel" and "No transport with Israel," expressed their anger at Israel's operations in Palestine. The demonstrators gathered at the entrances of the ports of Çolakoğlu and Yilport and blocked the passage of trucks and lorries for a while.

(The X posting reads: Protest against the Israeli ship docking at the harbour in Kocaeli Diliskelesi)

Zim's support for the genocide in Gaza and its transport of military supplies to Israel have led to protests around the world. Workers from the Port of Newark-Elizabeth in New Jersey to Canada, Italy, Australia and Greece have organised actions to stop ZIM's shipments.

Greek dockers stopped a shipment of 21 tonnes of ammunition to Israel with a protest at the port of Piraeus on October 17. The container of ammunition from northern Macedonia was due to be loaded onto a Marshall

Islands-flagged ship bound for Haifa. Chanting slogans such as “Freedom for Palestine” and “NATO is a murderer,” the workers prevented the truck from entering the port.

The harsh condemnation of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu by President Erdoğan, who stands at the head of the second largest army of NATO, cannot hide the complicity of the Turkish bourgeoisie in the Gaza genocide.

Seven months after the start of the genocide, the Erdoğan government was forced to announce that it was cutting off trade with Israel. During these seven months, a significant part of Israel’s steel imports came from Turkey. Cement, chemicals, even gunpowder, barbed wire and parts for weapons were also sent. It has now been revealed that this trade never stopped but continued uninterrupted routed through Palestine.

Nevertheless, in his speech in Istanbul on Monday, Erdoğan claimed without blushing, “We are the country that has given the most aid to Gaza. We have completely stopped trade with Israel. We have sacrificed a trade volume of \$9.5 billion.”

US-NATO bases in Turkey continue to support Israel and Turkey continues to facilitate Azerbaijan’s vital oil supplies to Israel.

While Turkish trade union confederations do nothing to block shipments to Israel and, like their international counterparts, turn a blind eye to the genocide in Gaza and Ankara’s complicity in it, pro-Palestinian demonstrators are taking a brave stand despite police repression.

Protests calling on governments to change their policies have proved insufficient to stop genocide and war. This and other historical disasters are a product of imperialism and will only end with its abolition. This depends on mobilising the working class as the leading social and political force in the struggle against Israel and its allies.



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