

Moroccan dockworkers stop F-35 war plane components from reaching Israel

Robert Stevens
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Backed by thousands of protesters, dock workers in Morocco this week refused to load Maersk container ships carrying parts for F-35 fighter jets Israel is using in its genocide in Gaza.

Anti-genocide protests which have taken place regularly in Morocco escalated to coincide with the arrival of the *Nexoe Maersk* (flagged in Hong Kong) and another container ship involved in the onward transit of the components to Israel, the US-flagged *Maersk Detroit*. It is understood that the F-35 parts were en route to the Nevatim Air Base in southern Israel, a pivotal location for the Israeli Air Force's war against the Palestinians.

The Danish shipping corporation A.P. Moller-Maersk plays a major role in facilitating the war, due to a contract with the US military which supplies the F-35s to Israel and components for the repair of the planes. The F-35s, manufactured by US corporation Lockheed Martin, are a critical element in Israel's killing machine. It has at least 40 of the advanced stealth warplanes in operation, with 75 on order.

On Sunday April 20, according to the Drop Site independent news outlet, "18 out of 20 remote crane controllers on the first shift" at Tangier Port "refused to operate machinery to service the ship believed to be carrying F-35 parts. On the second shift, 27 of 30 workers reportedly joined the refusal."

The report added, "While not officially acknowledged by the port or Maersk, internal updates viewed by Drop Site indicate the disruption remains in effect."

Drop Site has compiled a valuable X thread of the action by workers and their supporters—including photos and videos.

The workers blockade in Tangier followed a boycott, April 18, by dockworkers backed by thousands of protesters at Casablanca port as the *Nexoe Maersk* arrived.

This followed a call on April 14 by the Union of Port Workers in Morocco, for "workers, users and frameworks of companies operating in the port of Casablanca to boycott the ship". The statement explained that the *Nexoe Maersk* was in

charge of transporting a cargo of "spare parts for F-35 military aircraft and deadly American military supplies directed to the Zionist entity, after being emptied by another ship named MAERSK DETROIT coming from the port of Houston in the United States... in order to enable Israel to continue the barbaric and [sic] killing of Palestinian women and elders with control or censorship."

The *New Arab* reported that the Casablanca protesters began "assembling in front of the city's main train station, just metres from the entrance to the port. Waving Palestinian flags and wearing keffiyehs, the crowd moved cautiously toward the harbour, easily passing through an initial police barricade while chanting, 'Our protest is peaceful'". One placard held by a demonstrator read, "The ships of the enemy at the ports, the blood of the martyr won't be forgotten."

At the second line of police, "stationed closer to the port's main gate, protesters were halted. Some attempted to push through, aiming to reach the port where the Maersk *Nexoe* is set to dock... but were repelled by security forces."

Protesters remained there around two hours, the *New Arab* reported. "Several dockworkers at the port had already heeded a rare call by Morocco's two largest labour unions, the UMT and the CDT, to boycott the ship."

The *New Arab* stated, "According to the investigative reports and pro-Palestine groups, the [Maersk] Detroit container was scheduled to dock in Tangier on 20 April, where it would offload its cargo onto the *Nexoe* for onward shipment to Haifa..."

"Activists with BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] Morocco, MaskOff Maersk, and the Palestinian Youth Movement believe the ship is carrying a bulk shipment of 'surface analysers', devices used for spot repairs on damaged F-35s — equipment deemed critical to maintaining the jets currently deployed by Israel to bomb Gaza."

Sion Asidon, a founder of the Moroccan branch of the BDS movement, explained, "Roughly every ten days, one of these F-35s breaks down and needs repairs to return to service."

“A sea shipment in a full container implies a large volume of this essential equipment, a delivery that could significantly bolster Israel’s ongoing assault.”

On April 20, around 1,500 people protested in Tangier. *Press TV* reported, “‘The people want the ship banned,’ and ‘No genocidal weapons in Moroccan waters,’ people chanted as they marched down a road alongside the Tangier Med container port.” Nearly every docker in the port refused to service the *Maersk Detroit* when it arrived.

Maersk attempted to dissemble over its involvement in facilitating the genocide in Gaza, stating that *Maersk Detroit* and *Nexoe Maersk* “are carrying containers with F-35 parts. However, these shipments are destined for other countries participating in the F-35 program”.

The company claimed: “As part of the coalition-building of the F-35, Maersk Line Limited regularly transports parts between participating countries, including Israel, where F-35 wings are manufactured. These shipments, however, are conducted on behalf of suppliers – not the Israeli Ministry of Defense”.

This was after *Declassified* reported in an April 4 article that cargo data it and another news site, *The Ditch*, had evidence of showed how “goods from US Air Force Plant 4 in Fort Worth are being transported to Haifa port in Israel on two Maersk container ships between 5 April and 1 May, and then a separate company will courier them by land to Nevatim air base.

“Air Force Plant 4 is a US government-owned facility which is operated by Lockheed Martin, the prime contractor in the international consortium that produces F-35 jets.

“It hosts a mile-long factory where F-35 fighter jets and components are produced before being dispatched to NATO partners and allies including Israel.

“Nevatim air base is home to Israel’s squadron of F-35s, which have been used to commit war crimes in Gaza.”

As *Declassified* noted, “In response to previous criticism,” Maersk “issued a statement last year saying it has ‘contracts with the U.S. government’ and transports cargo to ‘over 180 countries under security cooperation programs’ which includes ‘military-related cargo to Israel’”.

In their attempts to muddy the waters, the company was assisted by a section of the Moroccan trade union bureaucracy. *Press TV*, among several news sites, reported that “the Moroccan media did not confirm the presence of any weapons on the [Maersk *Nexoe*] vessel, citing a statement by the CGT General Union of Dock Workers and Port Personnel of the Gulf of Fos: ‘All containers have been checked, nothing to report, no weapons, no parts’.”

Without the role of the trade union bureaucracy internationally, Israel—which is totally reliant on its imperialist backers to supply and continually reload its war

machine—could not have continued its genocide for the 18 months since October 2023.

As long ago as October 16, 2023, a group of Palestinian trade unions insisted, “This urgent, genocidal situation can only be prevented by a massive increase in global solidarity with the people of Palestine and that can restrain the Israeli war machine.” The unions called on “our counterparts internationally and all people of conscience to end all forms of complicity with Israel’s war crimes, most urgently halting the arms trade with Israel, as well as all funding and military research.”

In response the trade union bureaucracy internationally organised next to nothing, with any action in solidarity—with a few exceptions—organised by port and logistics workers themselves. Courageous actions taken by workers in 2023 include that of port workers in Barcelona, Spain; airport ground crew in Belgium; and workers at Athens International Airport. Last year workers at 11 major Indian ports refused to load or unload weapons bound for Israel on any ship, and Greek dockworkers blocked a shipment of 21 tonnes of ammunition to Israel.

In Britain, despite dozens of anti-Gazan genocide national demonstrations taking place mobilising millions collectively in London, the Trades Union Congress and main unions affiliated to it have refused to organise delegations in support. The leadership of one of the largest union in Europe, Unite, have mounted a witch-hunt of its members demanding an end to the supply of British arms to Israel.



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