

Global protests continue over Israel's seizure of Sumud flotilla

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The Israeli regime's criminal interception of the Sumud flotilla seeking to deliver aid to Gaza provoked protests around the world over the weekend. Millions of people, including one million in Rome, took to the streets in opposition to the genocide against the Palestinians and Israel's deportation of over 400 flotilla activists after their ships and cargoes were violently seized.

The protest in Rome took place the day after a one-day national strike involving 2 million workers was organised across Italy by the General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) and other trade unions.

Italy's fascistic government under Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni declared the strike "illegal" and threatened participants with fines. However, the mass support for the Palestinians, which has included the repeated blocking of ports by dockworkers to prevent ships destined for Israel from loading cargo and departing, has given vent to widespread hatred of US President Donald Trump's closest European ally.

Another 250,000 marched through Amsterdam Sunday to denounce the seizure of the flotilla's ships and the Dutch government's complicity in arms shipments to Israel.

In Spain, major protests were held Saturday in Barcelona and Madrid, fuelled by Israel's detention of over 40 Spanish activists in the flotilla. Demonstrators in Barcelona, where police underestimated a total of 70,000 participants, carried signs including "Stop the genocide" and "hands off the flotilla."

One protestor said, "How is it possible that we are witnessing a genocide happening live after what we [as Europe] experienced in the 1940s? Now nobody can say they didn't know what was happening."

Over 3,000 people joined a demonstration in Lisbon, Portugal, three of whose citizens were detained by Israel. Organisers had expected only 500 to participate.

Major protests denouncing the interception of the

flotilla were also reported from Kolkata, India, and Lahore, Pakistan. In Dublin, Ireland, the 17th national march for Palestine since October 2023—when Israel's imperialist-backed genocide in Gaza began—drew some 25,000 people to the streets. Among those detained by Israel, 16 came from Ireland.

In Sofia, Bulgaria, protesters carried placards declaring, "Gaza: starvation is a weapon of war" and "Gaza is the biggest graveyard of children." Thousands of people also took part in marches in Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Thousands protested on Sunday in Athens, Greece, following a 24-hour strike on Friday in solidarity with the Gaza flotilla at the port of Piraeus.

In London, police arrested close to 500 people because they declared their support for the proscribed group Palestine Action. Defend Our Juries, which organised the protest, said that over 1,000 participated in the demonstration, the latest in a series of protests since Keir Starmer's Labour government used anti-terror legislation to criminalise the activist group and make even a declaration of support for it a criminal offence.

The global demonstrations reflect the outrage among billions of people over the Zionist regime's barbaric slaughter of the Palestinians in Gaza and the collusion of their governments in this historic crime. While the official death toll since October 2023 stands at just over 65,000, estimates project that the real number of fatalities is many multiples of this, running into the hundreds of thousands. Famine is rampant in the enclave, and upwards of half a million people have been ethnically cleansed from Gaza City in the past six weeks alone.

A contributing factor to the widespread protests this weekend was the brutal treatment meted out by the Israel Defense Forces to the captured flotilla activists. Some of the 137 people already deported from Israel to Turkey reported systematic abuse, denial of water, and threats with weapons. Reports indicated that activists were forced

to drink from toilets to avoid dehydration and had heard how other inmates at the prison were subject to torture.

“Some boats were also hit by water cannon. All of the boats were taken by very heavily armed people and brought to shore,” an Italian local councillor who was part of the flotilla told AFP. “They put us on our knees, facing down. And if we moved, they hit us. They were laughing at us, insulting us and hitting us. They were using both psychological and physical violence.”

Describing the prison where they were held after reaching land, he added, “They were opening the door during the night and shouting at us with guns to scare us. We were treated like animals.”

Prominent climate and anti-genocide activist Greta Thunberg told Swedish authorities that she was dehydrated and left with inadequate food. She had developed rashes, which she suspects were caused by bedbugs.

Turkish activist Ersin Çelik said that at the detention centre “They dragged little Greta by her hair before our eyes, beat her, and forced her to kiss the Israeli flag. They did everything imaginable to her, as a warning to others.” She was “paraded like a trophy”, wrapped in the Israeli flag, said journalist Lorenzo D’Agostino.

The radicalisation of millions of workers and young people throughout the world produced by two years of genocide has sharply exposed the gulf separating the sentiments of the vast majority of the population from all major governments.

Israel has only been able to act so aggressively because it enjoys the unrestrained support of the American and European imperialists, who have sent the Zionist regime unlimited supplies of weaponry and defended its war crimes. Now, Trump has proposed a “peace plan” that robs the Palestinians of their democratic rights and proposes setting up a colonial regime in Gaza that will facilitate the ethnic cleansing or extermination of those Palestinians who remain.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* emphasised in a recent perspective, everything depends on the independent political intervention of the working class to stop the genocide.

What workers need are new organisations under their control—rank-and-file committees—so they can plan and direct a mass movement capable of stopping the machinery of imperialist war and genocide in its tracks. Workers in logistics,

transportation, and manufacturing, as well as others throughout all economic sectors, should take up this fight with the following demands:

- **An immediate halt to shipment of all weapons to Israel.**
- **The boycott of all trade and other economic activity with Israel.**
- **US, European and other corporations assisting Israel in carrying out the genocide must be indicted and prosecuted.**
- **The arrest of Israeli officials for war crimes.**
- **The end of repression of the opposition to the Gaza genocide.**
- **The immediate and unhindered access to Gaza for the supply of aid via all available land crossings and the ending of the 18-year-old naval blockade.**

These demands must be linked with the broader movement already developing in the working class internationally against austerity, war, and the destruction of jobs. The same criminal governments that funnel weapons of death to the Zionist regime are erecting dictatorial forms of rule at home to suppress popular opposition to oligarchic rule, military rearmament, and world war.

The fight to stop the genocide necessarily requires a movement committed to ousting the financial oligarchy from power and the overturn of capitalism, the root cause of imperialist barbarism that finds its most appalling expression in Gaza. This means setting out to establish workers’ power to carry through the socialist transformation of society.



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