

Dockers' international day of action: Workers strike at 113 ports against war and genocide

Our reporters
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Dock and port workers struck, picketed and demonstrated at 113 ports in 22 countries and regions across five continents on Friday under the banner “Dockers do not work for war.” The international day of action was a powerful demonstration of the solidarity and strength of the international working class.

The action mobilised tens of thousands of workers against the genocide of the Palestinians, the US-Israeli war against Iran, the war in Ukraine and the transformation of ports into staging posts for war. It came amid a growing wave of strikes and protests across Europe and beyond against governments pouring hundreds of billions into rearmament while imposing devastating austerity.

First called by dockworkers' unions in Greece, Italy, France, the Basque Country, Türkiye and Morocco, the action was backed by more than 25 unions. Their joint statement declared, “Ports must not be used for the transport of weapons, ammunition, military equipment and troops.”

In Italy, the dockers' walkouts were part of a 24-hour general strike called by the *Unione Sindacale di Base* (USB) against the cost of living, low wages and the war economy.

The far-right government of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni mobilised riot police against the strikes and protests. In Milan, 500 additional soldiers were on the streets, deployed under a security decree approved on October 20 to patrol alongside police until the end of the year.

On October 27, Transport Minister Matteo Salvini signed an order requiring the strike to be postponed in air, rail and maritime transport, taxis and local public transport, citing the legally protected All Saints' holiday period. Workers who struck regardless face fines of €500 to €1,000 a day. The USB denounced “a wrong and illegitimate order, which we disobey,” and said it would provide legal defence for workers facing sanctions.

Demonstrations were held in more than 40 cities. In Milan, about 25,000 marched, and more than 30,000 workers and students blocked the city's eastern ring road for more than an hour. About 20,000 rallied in Naples's Piazza Mancini, where an image of Meloni was burned, and 10,000 students and workers, including dockers and firefighters, marched to the prefecture in Livorno. Others marched in Florence, where organisers counted 12,000, in Palermo, where about 2,000 took part, and in Rome, Bologna, Brescia and Mestre.

Police used force against marchers in several cities. In Turin,

they charged and used water cannon outside the prefecture in Piazza Castello, and two people were injured. In Rome, they charged students near Via Claudia. In Vicenza, they turned water cannon and tear gas on about 2,000 marchers heading for the ring road, and organisers said three protesters were injured, one hit in the head by a tear-gas canister. In Mestre, police used batons. In Naples, protesters reached the port only after riot police tried for more than an hour to prevent them.

Dockers and port workers actions around the world included:

- **Italy:** Dockers struck at Genoa, Livorno, Trieste, Civitavecchia, Ancona, Ravenna, Gioia Tauro, Carrara and Bari. In Genoa, hundreds blocked the Albertazzi port gate at dawn with burning tyres. Students and workers marched from Principe station and joined the dockers in their thousands before entering the port. In Naples, protesters entered the port through the Bausan gate. In Reggio Calabria, workers and young people rallied behind the dockers. In Trieste, a march from the port's Gate 4 grew to 10,000.

- **Greece:** The seafarers' strike kept ferries tied up at seven ports—Piraeus, Rafina, Lavrio, Patras, Igoumenitsa, Elefsina and Rio-Antirrio. About 3,000 dockers and seafarers joined the walkout at Piraeus, the country's largest port, with pickets in front of the COSCO container terminals. At the cargo port of Thessaloniki, a three-hour stoppage halted more than 200 containers and trucks.

- **France:** About 14,000 port workers, including 7,500 dockers, struck at 24 ports: Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Le Havre, Rouen, Paris, Cherbourg, Saint-Malo, Roscoff, Brest, Lorient, Nantes Saint-Nazaire, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Port-Vendres, Sète, Marseille, Fos-sur-Mer, Toulon, Nice, Ajaccio, Bastia and La Réunion. At Le Havre, no trucks entered the port. “There is neither loading nor unloading,” said François Brisot, a local official of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT). Dunkirk's bulk, liquid and fuel terminals were blocked, nine ships lay idle at Nantes Saint-Nazaire and hundreds rallied at Fos-sur-Mer.

- **Spain and the Basque Country:** Two-hour stoppages were called from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at 16 ports: Bilbao, Pasaia, Algeciras, Avilés, Barcelona, Valencia, Cádiz, Almería, Gijón, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Huelva, Las Palmas, Málaga, Santander, Seville and Vigo.

- **Belgium:** In Antwerp, members of the BBTK union joined the

action.

- **Germany:** The ver.di union called off the unlimited pay strike at the North Sea ports after a settlement of 3.4 percent, against its 8.2 percent demand, meaning the Hamburg action on October 30 was reduced to a solidarity demonstration by young dockworkers and apprentices.

- **Denmark:** Copenhagen dockworkers called a rally at Nordhavn.

- **Türkiye:** Protesters gathered outside Istanbul's Haydarpaşa port under a banner reading "No to war, no to armament!" and called for an end to arms shipments to Israel. Prior to the day of action, the Liman-?? union said it would make statements at the ports of Mersin, Gemlik and Istanbul. Another body Limter-?? union called a protest at Haydarpaşa for 11 a.m.

- **Morocco:** Stoppages of up to two hours took place at Tangier and Casablanca.

- **India:** About 5,000 dockworkers demonstrated at major ports, with about 500 each at Mumbai and Kochi and 200 at Tuticorin. The action covered Nhava Sheva, India's largest container port, near Mumbai.

In **Marseille**, WSWs reporters spoke to Pierre, a port worker. Following a call from the CGT, a general meeting was held at the port with 500 to 800 dockers present to hear a speech by the general secretary of the CGT Ports and Docks of Fos-sur-Mer.

Pierre said, "All port activity was at a standstill. From what I could see, some subcontractors were still able to work in the port, on anything to do with infrastructure works. But all the activity of unloading ships and loading containers onto lorries was at a standstill. Workers were "concerned about the international situation, about what might happen in Ukraine, but also in the Middle East. This also affects the standard of living of port workers and dockers, particularly the cost of living and the high price of fuel, which in turn affects their wages."

In **Greece**, the action at Piraeus, in the Athens conurbation, was called by the container dockworkers' union ENEDEP during a 24-hour nationwide strike by seafarers for a pay rise.

The strike was coordinated with the day of action by three seafarers' unions, including the Panhellenic Union of Merchant Marine Engineers and the Panhellenic Union of Merchant Marine Sailors. They are demanding a 12 percent pay increase, improved working and safety conditions, a seven-hour working day and mandatory medical staff aboard ships. The Federation of Permanent Employees of Greek Ports held a three-hour stoppage, and the Piraeus Labour Centre—local council of trade unions—called a 24-hour strike across the city.

In Piraeus schoolchildren's drawings against war were displayed and a minute's silence was held for the victims of the rail crash at Urda in Spain.

At Patras, Greece's third-largest city, pickets blocked the port entrance. Two hydraulic cranes, mounted on the backs of lorries and placed either side of the entrance, held up a banner reading, in Greek and English, "We do not work for war and their profits."

Indian dock workers are confronting the Bharatiya Janata Party government that has played a critical role in arming Israel's genocide of the Palestinians. According to an Amnesty International report published on July 30, Indian state-owned and

private companies shipped at least 2,596 consignments to Israel between October 7, 2023, and November 30, 2025. These contained almost a millions items for Tel Aviv's war machine, including at least 564,970 explosive ordnance parts, 390,516 small arms parts and 298 military vehicle components, as well as 155mm artillery shells supplied to Elbit Systems and warheads for SkyStriker loitering munitions.

In their statement of October 29, the Socialist Equality Parties (SEP) in Europe explained that the dockers' action "points to the enormous power of the international working class to disrupt the machinery of war. This power must now be consciously organised and extended." It "cannot be confined to a one-day protest," but "must become the starting point for sustained, coordinated strike action."

The statement warned of the political limitations of the organisers, whose joint declaration "does not even mention Ukraine." The European trade union bureaucracies, including Germany's ver.di, back NATO's war against Russia. The USB and other unions associated with the Stalinist-led World Federation of Trade Unions confine themselves to appeals for negotiations between the imperialist governments and the Putin regime, while the CGT seeks to channel opposition into talks with President Emmanuel Macron.

The SEPs called for the building of independent rank-and-file committees in workplaces, schools and working-class neighbourhoods, linking dockworkers with railway workers, truck drivers, seafarers and young people resisting conscription, through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. The aim "must be the preparation of a sustained European general strike, challenging the rule of the capitalist oligarchy and raising the question of workers taking political power."

The task facing workers and youth is to expand and develop these struggles through the conscious adoption of the programme of socialist internationalism: the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe as part of a world socialist federation, and the building of the Socialist Equality Parties, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International, as the revolutionary leadership of the working class.



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