International port strike reveals workers' militancy ahead of November 5 strike in France

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On Friday, October 30, 2026, an international day of action brought together dockworkers from at least 113 ports in 22 countries against war, genocide and militarization. The movement originated in the "Istanbul Declaration," adopted in May 2026 at the third meeting of Mediterranean and European dockworkers' unions. The declaration was backed in particular by CGT Ports and Docks (France), ENEDEP (Greece), LAB (Basque Country), Liman-?? (Turkey), ODT (Morocco) and USB (Italy).

The significance of this action extends far beyond the ports. Against the background of an eruption of mass protests across Europe, it marks the growing intervention of the working class into the struggle against war, austerity and state repression. It shows the potential for an internationally coordinated movement against the capitalist governments and war.

It also specifically reveals the militancy of workers ahead of the series of national one-day strikes planned across Europe in November, beginning with the November 5 strike in France.

However, this potential for action cannot be realized if control of workers' struggles remains in the hands of the union apparatuses or of coalitions of national confederations. This emerges from an examination of both the strengths and the weaknesses of this mobilization. To mobilize the entire working class against war and dictatorship, workers must organize directly at the rank-and-file level, internationally, in action committees, in order to organize and wage an independent, revolutionary struggle.

The intensity of the strikes and protests in the October 30 port strike varied. Some ports were on strike; others hosted only rallies without a complete halt to operations. In Greece, at Piraeus, dockworkers held a three-hour work stoppage from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., while other unions struck for 24 hours. A separate seafarers' strike paralyzed ferry services; there were no sailings from Piraeus, Rafina, Lavrio, Patras, Igoumenitsa, Elefsina or Rio-Antirrio.

In Turkey, in Istanbul, protesters gathered outside the port of Haydarpa?a beneath a banner reading "No to war, no to armament." Liman-?? announced actions in Mersin, Gemlik and Istanbul, and a press statement was released in Ankara.

It was in Italy that street mobilization was the most massive. USB claims 1.5 million demonstrators in 60 cities, despite the government's order requisitioning transport workers. Protesters invaded the ring roads of Milan and Bologna and entered the ports of Genoa and Naples. There were tensions in Rome and Turin, and four police officers were injured in Vicenza.

In France, the CGT claimed that 95 percent of port activity was halted nationwide, but it organized no demonstrations. At Le Havre and Marseille-Fos, the union announced 100 percent participation in the strike, with container operations, the ArcelorMittal quays, the ore terminal and the car terminal all shut down. In Dunkirk, the container terminal was not affected, but bulk, liquids and fuel trade were "totally blocked."

At the general assembly of dockworkers in Marseille organized by the CGT, the general secretary of the CGT Ports and Docks union of Fos-sur-Mer adopted a tone of quite unusual radicalism, in the face of rising working-class anger in France.

He denounced the war: "The wars are not those of the workers but of their exploiters, together with the governments and their allies, who send the youth of their countries to the slaughterhouse to serve geopolitical interests by seizing territories with raw materials in gas, oil and minerals. Capitalism exists only through the exploitation of the working class, that is, of us, creating a world of war, poverty and insecurity for the peoples, while on the other side we hope for a better world."

After denouncing the Zionist regime, he warned of the militarization of industry now underway: "Everywhere, the militarization of port facilities is being prepared and organized at the initiative of the European Commission, along with the acceleration of artificial intelligence and automation. The exploitation of man by man is at a

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historically high level. The class struggle is very real, whether the reactionaries of the right and the far right like it or not."

On the war and the revolt of high school students in France, he added: "The consequence at the end of the chain is that we are the ones who pay at the pump. So yes, we are opposed to all wars and we campaign for peace. It is clear that opposing, fighting, demonstrating, putting forward a different choice of society and our redistribution of wealth is becoming more and more difficult. Just look at the high school students' movement in France."

He returned to the French presidential elections and the danger of the far right. "The Front National, or Rassemblement National, was founded by Nazis, Pierre Bousquet and Léon Gauthier, high-ranking collaborators for the Waffen SS; Jean-Marie Le Pen, a torturer in Algeria, the man who said the gas chambers were a detail of history. Marine Le Pen's party has its roots in the Vichy regime under Pétain, a regime that sent Jews, communist resistance fighters and CGT members to concentration camps, from which many of them never returned. Whether you are politically engaged or not, neither the far right nor the right has ever brought new rights to workers like us. They have attacked them constantly."

The secretary promoted Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France insoumise, arguing that "only the elected representatives of La France insoumise and the French Communist Party defend our interests against the media of Big Capital, BFM, CNews and the like, media owned by Vincent Bolloré, CMA CGM, etc., which spread the propaganda of those who want to destroy us." Finally, he called on port workers to mobilize on November 5 for the cross-sector day of action in France.

The CGT secretary's speech raises far more questions than it answers. His remarks on the war and the neo-fascist danger do not contain a trace of exaggeration. The question begins rather where the union bureaucrat's speech ended: What must workers do against these enormous dangers? Is the action of the CGT bureaucracy equal to the threats of world war, fascism and dictatorship that it has identified?

Despite these denunciations of war and of the danger of the far right, the CGT has isolated the French youth protests for six weeks, since late September, calling on workers to strike only on November 5. It remains to be seen whether the CGT even calls any strikes after that date. In the meantime, the CGT has made no attempt to turn the port strike into a springboard for a broader mobilization against Macron, the EU and the militarization of society.

The union bureaucracy refuses to let this day become the starting point for sustained, coordinated strike action involving railway workers, transport, logistics and industrial workers, teachers, healthcare workers and other sections of the working class. While this day of action was taking place at the ports, workers in other sectors were not even informed it was happening.

The objective situation poses the necessity of a European general strike against war, austerity and state repression. Such a general strike would inevitably pose the question of workers' power, and whether the workers or the bourgeoisie would rule.

The reluctance of the union bureaucracy and the CGT to organize a real mobilization against the war is explained by their determination to preserve their relations with the capitalist state and to prevent the working class from emerging as an independent political force. This was seen very clearly in the union leaderships' sellout of the mass strikes against Macron's pension reform in 2023.

The fight to broaden the dockworkers' action therefore requires a rebellion against the authority of these bureaucracies.

The Socialist Equality Parties call for the formation of independent, democratically controlled rank-and-file action committees in the ports, factories, transport, schools, universities and working-class neighborhoods. Their immediate task is to link dockworkers with railway workers, truck drivers, seafarers, industrial workers and everyone working in military production and transport, while uniting with young people resisting conscription, austerity and police violence.

This coordination must cross all borders. The ruling elites coordinate their economic attacks, rearmament and repression internationally; workers must respond with their own international organization. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), initiated by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), provides the framework for this struggle.

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