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‘How we blocked Israeli ship’ Italian dockers speak out

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'No arms in Genoa Port' – CALP poster via Facebook

By Gianni Del Panta

Over the last years, the Italian ports have seen the development of a long series of protests and strikes against the passage and loading of ships carrying military equipment. In Genoa the CALP ([Collettivo Autonomo Lavoratori Portuali](#) – Dockworkers' Autonomous Collective) has repeatedly struggled against Saudi ships filled with weapons and military vehicles that were subsequently used in the Yemen war. A few weeks ago, however, a very similar protest against a ship heading towards the port of Ashdod in

Israel, the Asiatic Island, developed in Livorno. *Middle East Solidarity* spoke to one of the dockers involved.

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What happened when you heard the ship was heading for Livorno?

The association Weapon Watch, which monitors the traffic of weapons in the European and Mediterranean ports, informed some members of the CALP that the Asiatic Island was arriving in Livorno. The ship had already stopped in Genoa, where it loaded military equipment such as munitions and explosives during the night and in secret. The CALP immediately contacted us to spread news. Promptly, we discovered that the Asiatic Island's last stop was the port of Ashdod in Israel. This made clear that the war material would have been used in the war of aggression that the Israeli state was conducting against Palestinians.

And you refused to be part of such atrocities. Is that right?

Exactly. We immediately started to search for the terminal in which the ship would dock. Once we discovered that it was the terminal Darsena Toscana (Tuscany harbour), we reached some of the colleagues who work there and are more politicised. In case the Asiatic Island had loaded military equipment, many workers declared that they would have gone on strike. There were a lot of rumors about this, and we received several reports about the presence of dozens of military vehicles in a terminal very close to that in which the ship was docked. Eventually, even thanks to our mobilization, the ship did not load any military equipment and rapidly left the port of Livorno.

Did the previous protests and strikes in the port of Genoa play any role in inspiring your mobilization?

Dockers in Genoa and above all the CALP were the very first to seriously question the passage and loading of ships with military equipment in the Italian ports. In so doing, they were a point of reference and a source of inspiration for us. Even more, they have shed light on something that is very relevant for all dockers. There are two main reasons for this. On the one hand, there is a clear and easy to depict moral issue: we do not want to be part of states that attack civilians or fight wars. On the other, loading military equipment and working on or next to ships that carry explosives is particularly risky for us. This problem is very relevant for a port such as Livorno, which has traditionally seen the passage of military equipment, often heading to the nearby American military base of Camp Darby.

On May 8, a meeting among workers of various Italian ports was held in Genoa. Who did attend the meeting and what are the main reasons for this kind of initiative?

In addition to the comrades from Genoa who hosted the meeting, there were also dockers from Livorno, Trieste, and Civitavecchia. We really hope to include workers from important ports of the South such as Napoli and Taranto in the near future. Our goal is to achieve a permanent form of collaboration among the most radical Italian ports. Initiatives like that in Genoa help to go in this direction and allow to put together workers coming from different seaside cities. It shows us, moreover, that we are not alone in our struggles.

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