

LABOR

Dockworkers Unions in Six Countries Announce Day of Strikes and Protests Against War and Genocide

Unions representing workers at 40 ports in Europe and the Mediterranean are calling for an international day of action on October 30.

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Italian dockworkers and students, blocking the Port of Livorno, in support of Palestine and an end to the genocide in Gaza, on September 22, 2025.

PHOTO BY LAURA LEZZA/GETTY IMAGES

Dockworkers unions in France, Greece, Basque Country, Turkey, Morocco, and Italy are calling an international day of action “against war and militarization” on October 30. They are demanding an end to “the genocide of the Palestinian people” and the “US-Israeli wars of aggression in the Middle East and against Iran.”

“Each union will decide the most appropriate form of mobilization according to its national circumstances, starting from strike action and from a shared commitment to prevent the loading of death and destruction,” reads a joint statement from the unions, which was sent to *Workday Magazine* and *In These Times* on July 31.

Together, the unions represent workers at 40 ports in Europe and the Mediterranean, according to the statement. Their call for an escalation emerged from a meeting of the port workers unions held in Istanbul in May. The announcement also expresses “full solidarity with the peoples of Cuba, Venezuela and Sudan,” and declares that “ports must not be used for the transport of arms, ammunition, military equipment or troops destined for war zones.”

“No to the war economy, government rearmament plans, and the project of militarization of ports and strategic infrastructure from [the] EU,” the unions assert in their statement. “Public resources must be used to meet people’s social needs, not to finance war.” Signatories include CGT FNP in France, ENEDEP in Greece, LAB in Basque Country, LIMAN-IS in Turkey, ODT in Morocco, and ORSA Porti and USB in Italy.



A rally of mostly dockworkers in Genoa, Italy, in response to attacks on the Global Sumud Flotilla, on October 3, 2025.

PHOTO BY EMANUELA ZAMPA/GETTY IMAGES

Since October 2023, Palestinian trade unionists have repeatedly called on union members around the world to go on strike and refuse to handle arms shipments to Israel, to protest the latter's military campaign in Gaza, which has been denounced as a genocide by leading human rights groups and scholars. (The United States has provided crucial political and financial support to Israel.) On April 5, 2025, the General Federation of Trade Unions in Gaza appealed to unionists to "create real pressure to stop this dirty war." Dockworkers have played a spirited role in answering this call.

From Belgium to Sweden to Italy, dockworkers have refused to handle weapons components bound for Gaza, and on February 6, they shut down 21 ports across the Mediterranean, including Bilbao and Tangier, to protest the use of civilian port infrastructure for military purposes, and the incorporation of their jobs into a war economy.

The statement follows Italy's two general strikes in the fall of 2025 in solidarity with Palestinians. Ten months ago, about 60 dockworkers gathered at the Port Authority building in Civitavecchia, a small Italian coastal town northwest of Rome. It was September 22, 2025, and they had walked off their jobs

earlier that day, shutting down the port as part of a general strike to protest the Italian government's status as the third largest supplier of arms to Israel. Where they stood, they were surrounded by about 600 people cheering them on—students, teachers, railway workers, public sector workers—a significant crowd for a tiny town.

“It was a beautiful sight to see the dock workers surrounded by their city,” recalls Riccardo Petrarolo, who serves on the national coordination body for Italy's ports with USB (Unione Sindacale di Base).

The dockworkers started getting WhatsApp messages from colleagues in larger cities, like Livorno and Genoa, reporting that workers had shut down their ports, too. And news of strikes and closures were also rolling in from the media. “They were saying the exact same thing was happening at the other harbors,” Petrarolo says. When the dockworkers announced each new shutdown over a speaker system, Petrarolo tells me, the crowd let out “a loud cheer, like at a stadium.”



The scene around the Trapezio pier in the Port of Salerno on June 9, 2025, where there was an effort to stop a ship thought to have weapons that would be used in the genocide in Gaza.

PHOTO BY IVAN ROMANO/GETTY IMAGES

These actions are the product of decades of worker-built relationships with Palestinians, and years of organizing against participation in arms shipments. On August 30, 2025, 40,000 people rallied in Genoa to send off the Global Sumud Flotilla to deliver food and aid to Gaza. For seafaring people—the workers who labor on the docks, load and unload ships, repair and move equipment, and transport goods to other ports—the flotilla’s struggles to reach Gaza resonated deeply, and attacks against the vessel provoked profound anger.

Riccardo Rudino, a dockworker with the city’s Autonomous Port Workers’ Collective (CALP), declared to the crowd that sent the ship off, “If, even for 20 minutes, we lose contact with our comrades on the flotilla, we will block all of Europe: from Genoa’s docks. Not a single nail will leave. It will be a global strike.”

Genoa dockworkers soon called for a general strike on September 22, to protest Italy’s complicity in the onslaught on Gaza, and USB, which has roughly 100,000 members in both the private and public sectors, supported the action. About half a million people walked off the job that day, and 1 million took part in protests across Italian towns and cities. Highways, streets, and subways were shut down, as people across the country took up the call, “Blocchiamo tutto,” or “Block everything.”

José Nivoi, a dockworker and spokesperson for Collettivo Autonomo Lavoratori Portuali (CALP), an independent dockworker union in Genoa, sailed with the Global Sumud Flotilla, and gave an interview from aboard the vessel on September 23 in support of the strike. “The mobilizations we have been carrying out until recently were totally in support of Palestine and we never backed down,” he said.

Then, on October 1 and 2 of 2025, Israel intercepted the vessels of the flotilla and arrested the hundreds of people on board. The time had come to make good on the threat of “not a single nail.” Italian organizers responded with an even bigger general strike on October 3. This time, the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), the largest union federation in Italy, called for the strike, as did USB. An estimated 2 million people protested in more than 80 cities. Ports and highways were blocked and shut down, rail lines were disrupted, and schools and universities closed.

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“This was organized very quickly and outside of the legal framework in Italy, and as before, involved large and small cities, and many people taking to the streets in solidarity,” says Petrarolo from USB. “This, of course, involved a reaction from the Italian state, which involved fines to the unions, and police and judicial actions against organizers. But this did not stop the organizing, and the actual result was that the next day 1 million people took to the streets in Rome.”

Dockworkers are hoping to build on the momentum. The announcement of the October 30 day of action is based on the “Istanbul Declaration,” which was endorsed by all signatories. Alongside their anti-war demands, workers are insisting that “collective agreements must guarantee real wage increases, secure employment, reduced working hours, and fair pension provisions.” And they don’t want mechanization or artificial intelligence to “eliminate jobs or undermine workers’ rights.”

The unions say, “We are ready to meet with organized groups of dockworkers and port workers from any other ports interested in becoming part of this common struggle.”

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