

Greek dockworkers block shipment of 21 tonnes of ammunition to Israel

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On Thursday evening, Greek dockworkers protested for hours at the Port of Piraeus and stopped an arms shipment headed to Israel.

Having found out that a container on a lorry had tonnes of bullets to be loaded onto a ship headed to Haifa, dozens of workers gathered at the gate of Piraeus and stopped the vehicle on a public road leading to the port.

The container had been trucked from North Macedonia and held 21 tons of ammunition. It was to be loaded aboard a Marshall Islands-flagged ship bound for Israel.

The tradewinds website reported, “The only vessel currently listed at the port’s docks is the 1,868-teu Vega Coligny (built 2023), a Marshall Islands-flag vessel on charter to Evergreen Line and operating on the carrier’s Levant Service that calls at the Israeli ports of Haifa and Ashdod.”

The Union of Container Handling Workers (ENEDEP) organised the action at the Piraeus Container Terminal, PCT. PCT is a subsidiary of COSCO Shipping Ports Limited, owned by the Chinese state. The port, located on the Saronic Gulf on the western coasts of the Aegean Sea, is the largest in Greece and one of the most important in Europe.

PCT issued a statement that it is “a port facility operator and under the concession agreement, its contractual obligation is to allow the cargo to pass through.

“The cargo in question was blocked by protesters on a public road and before the entrance gates to the terminal.”

As they stopped the truck, the dockers chanted slogans including, “Freedom for Palestine”; and “No land or water to the murderers of the world’s people.” On the container were sprayed the words: “Murderers,

get out of the port”.

A video of the protest by Sky News can be viewed [here](#).

A statement published on the X account of the All-Workers Militant Front (PAME), read, “After workers of Piraeus all night blocked the Israel container, the ship ‘Marla BULL’ departed WITHOUT the weapons.” The Marla Bull is owned by Israeli company ZIM Integrated Shipping Services.

The Piraeus port has long been a stronghold of the Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and its trade union affiliates. The KKE opposes Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians. The president of the ENEDEP is Markos Bekris. Bekris is a high-level union bureaucrat who sits on the governing council of Greece’s private sector General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) union federation, as well as being a member of the PAME board. This year Bekris stood as a representative for the KKE in the European Parliamentary elections.

Prior to the stopping of the truck, a statement posted on ENEDEP’s Facebook page read, “It’s time to shout loudly that we won’t allow Piraeus port to become a war springboard... We fight for peace... no to Greece’s participation in the war!”

The Balkan Insight (Birn) website noted, “The Workers’ Centre of Piraeus, the Metal Union of Attica and the Shipbuilding Industry of Greece, the Union of Shipwrights, workers, youngsters and other organisations in Piraeus all took part in the action to stop the shipment.”

While the workers successfully halted the shipping of ammunition destined to slaughter Palestinians, the port authorities are seeking retaliation. Reuters reported Friday, “The truck with the cargo remains with port authorities and an investigation has been launched into

the incident. An arrest warrant has been issued for a union leader, one of the coast guard officials said. The container had a valid transit permit, another official said.”

Speaking to the Birn, a Hellenic Coast Guard spokesperson said, “The vehicle [carrying the cartridges] was transferred to the Port Authority of Keratsini, which is conducting a preliminary investigation.”

The action by the Pireaus port workers demonstrates that it is only the coordinated action of workers around the world that can prevent Israel—backed by all the main imperialist powers—from perpetrating their systemised massacre of the Palestinians. In June, EDENEP members at Piraeus prevented another vessel, MSC Altair, from approaching the port after establishing that it was transporting military materiel to Israel.

Workers in Greece have also acted to ensure arms were not transported to fuel NATO’s war on Russia in Ukraine. In April 2022, dock workers in Thessaloniki refused to load NATO equipment for onwards transit to Ukraine.

Such action by trade unions was demanded by the Palestinian unions at the outset of Israel’s invasion over a year ago, but apart from a small number of actions—mainly organised by workers themselves, including by dockworkers in Barcelona in November 2023—the union bureaucracy internationally has refused to lift a finger to stop the transportation of weapons and materiel for Israel’s war machine.

The Greek dockworkers’ courageous and principled stand reveals the growing radicalisation of the working class, as Israel’s murderous assault intensifies.

Further actions impeding the war in Gaza must be organised by workers throughout Europe and internationally, above the heads of the union apparatus. Given the organisational strength of the KKE within the Greek ports, and the position enjoyed by the unions in Europe’s most important ports, far more action could have been organised that would have dealt a massive blow to Israel’s genocide.

This month, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) noted, “In the past decade Israel has greatly increased its imports of arms. SIPRI estimates that in the five-year period 2019–23, Israel was the world’s 15th largest importer of major arms,

accounting for 2.1 percent of global arms imports in the period. In 2009–13 it ranked only 47th.”



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