

“Block the Boat for Gaza”: Demonstrators Prevent Unloading and Loading of an Israeli Ship at the Port of Oakland, U.S.

By [Henry Norr](#)

Global Research, August 18, 2014

[Mondoweiss](#) 17 August 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

For the second day in a row, demonstrators succeeded on Sunday in preventing the unloading and loading of the Israeli ship Zim Piraeus at the Port of Oakland.

The ship had delayed its arrival in Oakland to avoid Saturday’s massive demonstration and planned community picket line. Today at around 5 p.m. an emergency blast went out over the Block the Boat for Gaza text network, summoning all hands back to the Port to set up picket lines in front of the gates to the berth where the ship was to dock. Hundreds of people scrambled out to the isolated harborfront site and quickly mounted picket lines at, apparently, all four gates (I could only see two of them).



Sunday’s hastily called community picket lines were substantial enough to persuade longshore workers to stay off the job. (Photo: Jessie Sandoval)

Though the numbers were far smaller than on Saturday, the action succeeded again because most of the longshore workers who had been called in to work the ship (members of Local 10 of International Longshore and Warehouse Union) opted not to cross the picket lines. (None crossed at my gate.) At around 8 p.m. Lara Kiswani, Executive Director of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) and key leader of the Block the Boat campaign, picked up a bullhorn and announced that the organizers had just received official confirmation that the shift had been cancelled and the ship would not be worked tonight.

Here’s the official victory statement from AROC:

On August 17th, 2014 Palestine was once again victorious in Oakland, California. For the second day in a row the Bay Area community held off the Israeli Zim ship from unloading at the Port. Thousands of people rallied on Saturday and successfully kept the ship at Bay on its regular scheduled day. Today we got word that the ship had arrived and workers were being called to unload it. Within 30 minutes we mobilized over 400 people back to the Port. And we won!

Workers honored our picket and stood on the side of justice, as they historically have. Oakland said no to Zionism and blocked the boat for an entire weekend. This is the first time in history that this has happened. Israeli apartheid is falling one port at a time!

Palestine will be free from the river to the sea. Long live international solidarity

and the struggle for liberation!



Pickers cheer as Lara Kiswani of AROC (center left) announces victory. (Photo: Shadi Rahimi)

*Original report (with some edits and new photos added) on Saturday's action:*Thousands of demonstrators demanding an end to the siege of Gaza and justice for all Palestinians succeeded – if only temporarily – in preventing an Israeli-owned freighter from docking at the Port of Oakland yesterday.

A diverse and spirited crowd of between 2,000 and 3,000 took part in the “Block the Boat for Gaza” action. The plan was to set up a community picket line outside the freight terminal where the Israeli ship, the Zim Piraeus, was due to dock, in the expectation that longshore workers would honor the line and stay off the job so the ship wouldn’t be unloaded or loaded. The action was originally scheduled for 5 a.m. Saturday, just before the ship was due in port, but on Friday evening, when it became clear that it was circling outside San Francisco Bay instead of proceeding to its scheduled docking, protest organizers postponed the demonstration until 3 p.m. In the afternoon, with the ship still stalling at sea in an obvious attempt to wait out the protest, organizers decided to proceed with march to the port and declare a victory, even though the ship is now expected to dock in Oakland sometime Sunday evening.



Some 3,000 people marched to the Port of Oakland on Saturday to “Block the Boat for Gaza.” (Photo: revolution-news.com)

The action was sponsored by a long list of organizations, but two local Arab-American organizations – the Arab Resource and Organizing Center and the Arab Youth Organization – played central roles in organizing it.



Young Palestinian- and other Arab-Americans played the key roles in Saturday’s action. (Photo: Jackie Brown/Arab Resource and Organizing Center)

The crowd mirrored the enormous (and ever-increasing) diversity and militant traditions of the Bay Area and especially of Oakland.



(Photo: Jessie Sandoval)



The crowd reflected the diversity of the East Bay community. (Photo: Henry Norr)

While Gaza was the main focus, numerous signs and frequent chants linked the situation there to Ferguson, Missouri: when, for example, the march reached the terminal where the ship was due and found it heavily guarded by the Oakland police, the crowd broke into chants of “Hands up, don’t shoot” and “Killing children is a crime – Ferguson to Palestine.”

(The issue of police violence resonates deeply in Oakland: over the years the community has mourned numerous young men of color killed by law enforcement officers; in 2011 an Oakland Police officer fractured the skull of Iraq veteran Scott Olsen with a beanbag round during an Occupy Oakland demonstration; and back in 2003, Oakland police injured dozens, including me, by opening fire – albeit with “less lethal” weaponry such as wooden dowels – on a crowd marching on the port to protest the U.S. attack on Iraq.)

Predictably, most local media ignored the action, though it was among the largest protests in the Bay Area in several years. One TV station that did cover it reported that “At one point the group looked to be well over 100 people” – an assessment that could only have been a deliberate attempt to downplay the demonstration. The Guardian, however, posted [a very good report](#).



(Photo: Justin Benttinen/The Guardian)



The original source of this article is [Mondoweiss](#)
Copyright © [Henry Norr](#), [Mondoweiss](#), 2014

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Henry Norr](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca