“Refuse Israeli Ships Campaign”: Palestine Solidarity War Coalition in Vancouver Blocks Israeli Ship

By Free Palestine Movement
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In a four-day standoff pitting human rights groups and organized labor against Israeli shipping giant Zim, the giant was defeated today in Vancouver, Canada.

The huge container ship Zim Djibouti first docked at the high-tech Deltaport facility on September 5, only to discover that the workers had agreed to respect a picket line set up by human rights advocates. The coalition of picketers, under the name Block the Boat Vancouver, were trying to prevent the unloading and loading of the ship, as a solidarity protest against Israel’s 47-year blockade of the port of Gaza and the recent Israeli attack on Gaza that killed more than 2000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, as well as 72 Israelis, almost all soldiers.

The ship then returned to open water along the Pacific coast and stayed there several days, until midnight last night. At that time it set course for Port Angeles, on the US side of the passage to Vancouver. By unloading at an unexpected US port, the company apparently hoped to circumvent the blockade.

It didn’t work. Perhaps the logistics of arranging passage by land through another country for the hazardous cargo on board was too much, or perhaps the docking facilities were inadequate for the huge ship, but it turned back and returned to the open sea. At the time of this report, it has still failed to declare a new destination and arrival time.

This is a huge victory for the Vancouver coalition, undoubtedly costing Zim enormous sums in fuel, delays, and having to carry excess cargo to unintended destinations, impeding the other operations. It also continues the string of Block the Boat actions at ports on the US west coast that began with the August picket in Oakland, California of another Zim ship that ended with similar results.

Let’s all congratulate Vancouver and encourage ports all over the world to refuse Israeli ships and ships from Israeli companies. Customers will have to think twice about using an Israeli line for their cargo, as delivery becomes less certain. Hopefully this is just the beginning of a world wide campaign against Zim and all other Israeli shipping, until Israel reconsiders its policy of blocking all shipping to and from Gaza.

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