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International solidarity

Swedish Dockworkers Against Russia's and Israel's Wars

- Features -



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Ahead of May Day 2022, two months after Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, Ukrainian trade unionists called for solidarity with the invaded country. [1] Artem Tidva, a Ukrainian left-winger and labour activist, addressed international unions calling for actions to help stop the Russian war machine.

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[1] For the appeals from Ukrainian unions at the outset of the full-scale invasion, see "Joint Statement of the Ukrainian Sectoral Trade Unions on Situation in Ukraine", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, February 2022. Available at: <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article61291>

[2] The Swedish Dockworkers' Union (Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet), founded in 1972, is an independent blue-collar union outside the main LO confederation. It organises workers at around twenty Swedish ports.

[3] The Swedish port employers are represented by Sveriges Hamnar (Ports of Sweden), the national federation of port companies, which sits within the broader Transportföretagen employer association.

[4] Mariupol was besieged from February 2022 and fell to Russian forces in May 2022; it remains under Russian occupation. Kherson was occupied in March 2022 and liberated by Ukrainian forces in November 2022, though the city continues to be regularly shelled from Russian-held positions across the Dnipro River.

[5] On the broader debate among European unions about how to translate stated support for Ukraine into practical measures, see Pierre Jequier-Zalc, "France: Faced with the new geopolitical situation, unions refuse to abandon Ukrainian workers", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, April 2025. Available at: <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article74316>

[6] For a detailed analysis of the mixed record of sanctions against Russia and the mechanisms of circumvention, see Lutz Brangsch, "Russia: Are Sanctions Working?", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, October 2022. Available at: <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article64314>

[7] The reference is to the industrial dispute between IF Metall (Industrifacket Metall, Sweden's largest private-sector union) and Tesla, which began in October 2023 after Tesla refused to sign a Swedish collective agreement for its mechanics. The action has been supported by sympathy strikes from dockworkers, postal workers, electricians and painters.

[8] On 8 July 2024, a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile struck the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, the largest paediatric hospital in Ukraine, killing two adults and wounding dozens of patients and staff. Subsequent investigations by Ukrainian authorities and open-source analysts identified Western-made electronic components in missile fragments recovered at the site.

[9] On the history of labour boycotts and the BDS movement, see Andrew Ross, "Israel – Labour and the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, July 2014. Available at: <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article32673>

[10] For a comparable account of port workers refusing to load arms, see David Broder, "We Won't Load Your Ships of Death — Italian dockers against Saudi war machine", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, July 2019. Available at: <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article49445>

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[11] For recent examples of dockworker action in Italy following the Israeli interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, see "Israel intercepts Global Sumud humanitarian aid flotilla", Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières, October 2025. Available at:

<https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article76461>