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Palestine solidarity

What if Genoa wasn't an anomaly?

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The large mobilization for the [Global Sumud Flotilla](#) is a barometer of the social climate. And it tells us that there is still room for humanity.

What happened in Genoa in recent days was something rather anomalous, not to say exceptional. A growing movement of international solidarity began with the collection of food supplies and culminated on Saturday evening with a huge march accompanying the departure of the four boats that will participate in the Global Sumud Flotilla. It will attempt to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza and break its isolation.

This is a very partial, immediate account of what happened in my city, which I believe is worth reflecting on. Music for Peace (MfP) is an association that has been collecting food and aid in general for years for people in conflict zones, from Palestine to Sudan, to mention perhaps the most significant, and for the city's poor. It decided to participate in the flotilla by collecting food aid. Together with MfP, among the first promoters were the dockworkers of Calp (Collettivo autonomo lavoratori portuali, Autonomous Collective of Port Workers). After years of protests against Saudi ships passing through to bring weapons for the war in Yemen, the recent actions against the Chinese ship that was supposed to deliver war material to Israel and yet another Saudi ship, represented a quantum leap.

In both cases, in fact, the dockworkers, with growing public interest, managed to prevent the passage of weapons through the port. That same attention has grown exponentially in recent days. After the MfP appeal to collect 40 tons of food to send to Gaza, the city mobilized in an way we have not seen for some time. Trade unions, neighbourhood committees, associations, scouts, sports clubs, and many individual citizens queued up in front of the Music for Peace headquarters. The collected material reached nearly 300 tons, so much so that the promoters had to call a stop because there was no more space to store the food. Some of the volunteers who showed up to pack and load the food were turned away because there were too many of them and they were getting in the way.

In this climate of growing mobilization, the Saturday evening march took place at 9 p.m. on a Saturday at the end of August. The police said there were about 40,000 people. The city now has less than 570,000 inhabitants. It was a size that I had not seen in Genoa since the G8 summit almost 25 years ago. It was a mix of citizens of all generations, with a rather low average age, which is rare for an old city like Genoa. The organizers had asked people to bring only Palestinian flags. Peace flags were spontaneously added to these. An almost futile appeal: what other flags could represent this people at the moment?

At the end of the march, a former member of parliament from the Democratic Party said: "If this demonstration had been organized by the PD and CGIL, there would have been two hundred of us." Maybe not two hundred, but perhaps not more than a 1,000.

The mixture of spontaneity and grassroots organization was evident. The decisive factors in such a large mobilization was the concrete goal of aid, as well as the political aim of truly contesting a genocide that too few recognize. People who had not taken to the streets in a long time, chanted "Free Palestine" and sang "Bella ciao." There were many improvised signs, which were accurate and ironic, as often happens when a mobilization is widespread among large sections of the population. It was a huge march for Genoa, which tells us what had been brewing for some time, at least on this issue, and of the desire or willingness to return together to the streets, to protest, to mobilize in the flesh.

This was a procession with an unusual route. Starting from the MfP headquarters, it went along the elevated road, which is always closed to pedestrians, and arrived at the old port. In the distance, higher up, where trains emerge

from two long tunnels, train drivers sounded their horns to greet the demonstrators. On the other side, by the sea, the dockworkers of the GNV shipping group, having finished their evening shift loading ferries, greeted them with their horns. In short, there was a widespread atmosphere of support, which reminded me of the support received in Corso Torino and Corso Sardegna during the last G8 march, the one following the clashes that had set those very streets ablaze. I recall the surprising show of support from the residents who threw water from their windows to cool the demonstrators during those scorching and tragic days of July 2001.

The epicenter these days, however, has been the MfP headquarters, a place between Sampierdarena and the city centre. A place surrounded by traffic, workshops by day and prostitutes by night, now dominated by the arrival of the superstore Esselunga. A place that, in its (re)existence as a social space within a busy traffic junction, has managed to attract thousands of people from all over the city.

It was impressive to see so many people gathered in such an unusual place. MfP has been organizing its parties there for years, but Saturday's turnout was undeniably higher than usual.

The march, here is a [video](#), ended in the Old Port, in front of the boats ready to depart. There were many speeches behind a giant Palestinian flag hoisted on the masts of the boats. The audience was large, despite the late hour and the long walk. Among the most appreciated was that of the main animator of Music for Peace, Stefano Rebori, his voice worn out from the fatigue of the last few days. He was followed by port historian Riccardo Rudino, who announced that if the action in support of the Palestinian people is hindered, then the dockworkers will not only block weapons for Israel, but will block everything destined for that country. [1] Mayor Silvia Salis emphasized that a city awarded a gold medal for the Resistance cannot fail to support those who resist.

The representative of the Genoese Curia spoke about how, since the G8 summit in this city, people believe that another world is possible. The finale was left to the artist Pietro Morello, who asked everyone not to remain silent and invited them to sing Bella ciao one last time. Finally, the boats departed, announced by fireworks set off by the Calp dockworkers and followed by an excited and grateful crowd who watched them sail away as far as they could see.

I am writing this article not only because I am excited (you can tell, right?), but precisely because I don't get excited easily. I think it was an important moment for my city. I don't know what it might mean for the future and for other cities, but it seems to me to be a possible barometer of the social climate. I hope it is not just a passing anomaly. In difficult times, there is always room for the unexpected, the surprising - in short, for humanity.

1 September 2025

Translated for **International Viewpoint** by Dave Kellaway from [Jacobin Italia](#).

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[1] Novaramedia, 2 September 2025, "[Italian Dockworkers Threaten to 'Shut Down All of Europe' If Gaza Aid Flotilla Is Blocked](#)".