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Italy - Palestine solidarity

# 22 September: a day of hope, a day of possibility

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**A second general strike in solidarity with Palestine has been called in Italy for 3 October, we publish the assessment by Sinistra Anticapitalista of the first one on 22 September.**

The movement has been overwhelming, a political and moral rebellion against a genocide that has been going on for months, indeed years. It has spoken up against all the direct and indirect complicity that supports and guarantees this endless horror. But also it is an uprising against all the uncertainties, fears and bureaucratic conservatism that have characterised the traditional trade union forces and the moderate left. We are seeing a real leap forward in mobilization, with the emergence of a vast mass movement that has involved and brought to the streets not only militants, but an extraordinarily wider population, “ordinary” people who understood that they could not stand still, that the “never again” that had been proclaimed after the Holocaust had to be reaffirmed with all possible force. All the more so in the face of a genocide that is not hidden but appears clearly on television every day. There is an awareness that we must reject the “banality of evil” and the way those in power want to accustom citizens and entire peoples to it.

## **The strike for Gaza**

The repeated mobilizations of recent months throughout the country and the Flotilla's solidarity and aid initiative created the conditions for the date of the 22nd to become the central reference point. Even the media had to acknowledge that it was the day of the strike for Gaza, a day of solidarity which everyone recognized.

It is a mobilization that opens up great hope, that all is not lost, that a great mass movement is possible, that millions of people reject the barbaric existence of capitalism and neo-colonialism. All this is perhaps possible because yesterday those who had never marched before began to do so, and many others started again. Perhaps there were a million people in Italy, many young people, many women, many workers, but also many people in their forties and older, those who knew the “glory days” of the struggles of the 1970s and 1980s. All clearly stated that the policies of governments and the ruling classes must and can be rejected.

A difficult but not impossible task lies ahead: to strengthen and expand this movement in workplaces and communities to build an ever stronger movement against rearmament and against the nefarious policies that create the conditions for war.

It will require great unity and strong political will, because the traps, provocations and pitfalls that the forces of the right, governments and bourgeois elites will set in motion will be countless and shameless. They must be understood, thwarted and overcome each time.

## **The Movement took over the streets**

If the slogan “general and widespread strike” ever made sense, what happened yesterday in Italy is very similar to it. The slogan “let's block everything”, launched by Genovese dockworkers in the aftermath of the launch of the Global Sumud Flotilla, was put into practice by hundreds of thousands of people – students, workers, activists, indignant citizens, political organizations, associations, social groups, etc. It was a record number for this type of call: a strike

called by a grassroots union, the USB (and taken up by other grassroots unions) which had not always been able to forge real unity. However they understood better than others the increasingly strong mood and feelings among the working classes and citizens and the need for a date for a unified mobilization after the many demonstrations that had taken place in scattered form in recent months. Thus, the strike was recognised by many people – once referred to as – as ‘over the top’ as the only useful tool to make an impact, or at least to try to do so, in a context determined by the genocidal practices of the Israeli government, the blatant complicity of the right-wing parties in government. But also given, the reluctance – only recently undermined – of the CGIL trade union and the centre-left to call a spade a spade and to tap into a feeling of indignation that is increasingly acute and widespread in large sectors of society as well as in social movements traditionally inclined towards these forms of struggle.

Worth noting is the participation of school students, but also the massive participation of teachers (many schools went on strike and took to the streets), which is another source of hope for the future. Schools are affected not only by the bourgeoisie's plan to turn them into businesses, but also by the reactionary, nationalist and anti-democratic project of the governing forces.

The CGIL leadership missed a historic opportunity to call for a general mobilization on the day already decided by others to maximise the success of the strike and the demonstrations, as requested by the representatives of the left-wing trade union current, Le Radici del sindacato (roots of the trade union). Its leaders argue that the CGIL is the only trade union organization in Europe to take a stand against European rearmament and to have organised a day of struggle (albeit a completely fragmented one) – and this speaks volumes about the state of European trade unionism and also about the defeats and retreat of large sections of workers. However its choices also indicate that those who lead the country's largest mass organization did not have the tools or the will to understand what was happening in the country. Worse still, they were held back by the conservatism of the apparatus and their relationship with the other two trade unions (sic...) and the PD (Democratic Party). Fortunately, many CGIL members and delegates played a significant part in the mass mobilization.

It is difficult to quantify how many people took part in the marches, but the demonstrations involved at least 80 locations and all the major cities, from Naples to Turin, from Genoa to Florence, from Bologna to Palermo, they were unusually large, out of the ordinary, Especially compared to the numbers seen in recent decades, demonstrating that there was an overwhelming and moving “popular outpouring of citizens”, which overwhelmed even the organisers themselves. For this reason, yesterday's streets were owned by the mass movement.

Perhaps we can speak of a million people in the streets. Ports were blockaded to prevent the supply of weapons. Stations and transport were blocked by demonstrations and strikes, and there were many ways in which people expressed their determination not to remain silent, to make their voices heard in rejection of injustice and massacres. It is more difficult to quantify the impact of the strike in the workplace, but it was certainly very significant in transport and education.

In Rome, the demonstration was incredible in size, starting at 10.30 a.m. in Piazza dei Cinquecento with people arriving in dribs and drabs or with one of the five marches from the meeting points. Three hours later, after negotiations with the police, a march set off, covering about 10 km until 5 p.m., when it reached – and occupied – the Faculty of Arts after crossing the Tangenziale Est ring road on foot. Traffic in the capital literally ground to a halt, but for the first time, many motorists stuck in traffic jams showed sympathy and solidarity with the demonstrators (some waving keffiyehs from their windows!). This “solidarity” from motorists blocked by the marches and occupations of motorway sections was a “novelty” throughout the country.

## The reasons for success

This success is due to a combination of several factors:

- clear radical but understandable slogans stop the genocide, denounce political, military, academic and economic complicity, support the Global Sumud Flotilla identified as a concrete gesture of solidarity with the people of Gaza.
- The desire to be there, but with equally tangible gestures, such as the record collection of food to be taken to Gaza in Genoa, to truly be the “ground crew” of the flotilla.
- The awareness of the extraordinary gravity of the situation, the weakness of the international community, and the catastrophe of humanitarian law.

There are certainly other reasons that led to the strike, and the mobilization in the streets, and these are due to the role of a smaller but significantly consistent sector:

- The joint call for demonstrations between Palestinian diaspora networks and the flotilla's organising committee. There is no doubt that the USB, since the beginning of this affair, has always stood alongside Palestinian organizations in Italy, while other groups that have also had historical relations with the PLO and PNA have shown themselves to be extremely timid in the face of pressure from the official Jewish community and its political appendage, the self-styled “left for Israel”.
- The awareness that what is happening in Gaza and the West Bank (but also in Ukraine) is having repercussions on everyone's working and living conditions with the EU's shift towards rearmament. This has not yet been taken on board by the broad popular strata and workers, but this connection is increasingly visible and will be even more so with the launch of the proposed budget.

Certainly, the political, trade union, social and student galaxy that orbits around USB and other grassroots trade unions has been a driving force, and we consider the support of the radical left for the success of a generalised strike to be positive. This includes many CGIL members and trade union representatives in the workplace who are openly critical of the way in which the CGIL leadership has handled the situation. For instance the hasty calling of a strike 72 hours before its competitors, as if a political and organizational intervention can be achieved without consistent choices and concrete initiatives).

For the first time, a call by the grassroots unions has been more successful than the corresponding call by the confederation (perhaps only the great school strike of 2000 constitutes a precedent), precisely because it has been taken up by a much larger “group” of people and workers.

## The challenges of the future

We need even greater mass involvement, better grassroots organization and radical content

The sea of people that have swept through cities and small towns allow us to look at the upcoming mobilizations as a further path of growth and expansion of the mass movement:

- starting first with the national demonstration on 4 October,

- then with the traditional Perugia-Assisi march which was already called upon and will be called upon even more to overcome its traditional and customary limits,
- and then with the subsequent demonstrations already called planned by the CGIL,

All the protagonists should work to maintain and indeed multiply the participation of all sectors of the working class, both those that are more or less stable and those that are totally precarious, while at the same time raising the level of awareness, combativeness and concreteness expressed in the slogan “let's block everything”.

It will also be necessary to have the ability to manage the provocations and choices of the class adversary, the government and the forces that manage public order on

Incidents were avoided in Rome thanks to the leadership skills of the organisers, who managed the situation quite well, including inviting the police not to raise tensions, for example by avoiding wearing helmets when the march invaded the ring road.

The same cannot be said for what happened in Milan, where the repression was very harsh and will have repercussions for some of those individuals but also for the rest of the movement. The level of repression chosen by the government will also play a role in the continuation of the mobilizations. The Security Bill was drafted with the specific aim of neutralising the possibility of conflict. War and repression are two sides of the same coin.

The strength of the mass movement and its capacity for political leadership can and must ensure that the movement is strengthened and organised in the workplace. This capacity will be decisive for the future and for bringing about a lasting change in the balance of power between the classes, which in turn presupposes the unity of action of the trade union forces. We also need the communities in the neighbourhoods and cities to confront the offensives and counter-offensives of the right wing and capitalist power.

This is also because the ultimate goal is to build international support for the Palestinian people and a movement against rearmament, i.e. the organization of a European general strike.

24 September 2025

Translated for **International Viewpoint** from [Sinistra Anticapitalista](#).

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