

NYC/NJ activists picket Port of New York to block Israeli-operated cargo ship

written by Terri Kay
August 21, 2021



Block the Boat activists picket arrival of Israeli apartheid-profiteering Zim Qindao at Maher Terminal, Elizabeth, New Jersey. Photo: Jihad Dawoud

Elizabeth, New Jersey – Sunday, July 25 at 6am, about 100 pro-Palestine community activists in the New York metropolitan area picketed Israeli shipping giant ZIM in an attempt to block their cargo ship, Zim Qingdao, from unloading its cargo in the Port of New York/New Jersey at the Maher Terminal in Elizabeth, NJ. Zim Integrated Shipping Services Ltd (ZIM) is Israel's largest cargo shipping company, often dealing [in Israeli manufactured military technology, armaments and logistics equipment](#).

The event was organized by Block the Boat NY/NJ, the local affiliate of an international coalition of labor and human rights organizations fighting for justice in Palestine, led by the Arab Resource and Organizing Center in Oakland, CA.

"We are sending a message that profiteering from Israeli apartheid and the ongoing violence against the Palestinian people will not be welcome in New York, New Jersey, or anywhere on the East Coast," said Nerdeen Kiswani, Chair of [Within Our Lifetime](#)-United for Palestine. "Our communities are taking a stand against the ethnic cleansing, evictions, and bombings that Palestinians face every day."

Chanting "STAND UP, SHUT IT DOWN , TURN THAT BOAT RIGHT BACK AROUND", "INJURY TO ONE, INJURY TO ALL! TEAR DOWN ISRAEL'S APARTHEID WALL!" "Move Boat, Get Out the Way", and "WHEN PEOPLE ARE OCCUPIED, RESISTANCE IS JUSTIFIED!" picketers held colorful signs and banners as the dockworkers drove past them to begin their shift. A few honked in solidarity and many popped out their cameras to take video of the lively and spirited picket line.

The Zim Qingdao had docked shortly before the picketers arrived. In an attempt to avoid the protest, Zim had tried to hide their approach by removing the ship from the Maher Terminal's shipping schedule. Although police blocked demonstrators from gaining access to the employee entrance, Zim was well aware of our presence.

Zim refused to comment when asked by a reporter from the local National Public Radio station, which covered the event.

Actions like this one against ZIM are a response to a [call from labor unions in Palestine](#) urging workers and communities worldwide to refuse dealings with Israeli companies. The international #BlocktheBoat has received over 150 [endorsements](#) from labor unions, faith, and community organizations worldwide, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions ([COSATU](#)), the largest federation of trade unions in South Africa, representing 1.8 million people. Recent escalations of Israeli [violence](#) against Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank have prompted thousands of [demonstrations](#) in cities across the world.

This mobilization follows months of successful [actions](#) on the North American West Coast which prevented the unloading of ZIM-operated vessels in Oakland, Seattle, and Prince Rupert. Over 8,000 people worldwide have signed up to answer the call to action at port cities around the world, as part of the [BDS](#) movement.

In Oakland, the ZIM-operated *Volans* was forced to disembark with its cargo in tow after being [blocked](#) from unloading for several weeks by a community picket. The same *Volans* ship eventually landed in Prince Rupert, BC. After a public [call to action](#), First Nation, Arab, and allied community members organized a picket to successfully block the ship from unloading for 5 days. In Seattle, [Falastiniyat](#), a Palestinian feminist collective organized community pickets at Seattle's port, successfully [blocking](#) ZIM *San Diego* ship from being unloaded for 4 days before a police crackdown [forced](#) the unloading of the vessel. Meanwhile solidarity actions were held in Los Angeles, Vancouver, New York/New Jersey, Houston, Detroit, Italy, and South Africa.

The San Francisco-based Arab Resource and Organizing Center first [called on communities](#) to block ZIM-operated ships in the U.S. in 2014, with the first successful #BlockTheBoat action. Organizers have claimed the disruption of ZIM's

operations as a major victory for the international Boycott, Divestment, & Sanctions (BDS) movement, which works to put pressure on businesses profiting from Israeli [apartheid](#).

The BDS movement has gained national prominence as a flashpoint in US politics as right-wing legislatures attempt to criminalize the [boycott](#) movement. Several BDS campaigns globally, including #BlockTheBoat, have seen numerous [successes](#) over the past year, driven by [plummeting](#) public support for Israel in the wake of human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

“Across the US, workers and social justice movements are standing to show their support for the Palestinian struggle for freedom, and that there will be a high price for all companies who do business that profits the apartheid state of Israel,” said Lara Kiswani, Executive Director of AROC

Block the Boat NY/NJ Coalition member organizations and endorsers include AROC: Arab Resource & Organizing Center, New York 4 Palestine, Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, Within Our Lifetime: United for Palestine, Labor for Palestine, Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network, American Muslims for Palestine – New Jersey, the ANSWER Coalition, Peoples Organization for Progress, Northern New Jersey Jewish Voice for Peace, Jews for Palestinian Right of Return, Jewish Voice for Peace-NYC, NYC Democratic Socialists of America, the NJ Green Party, CUNY4 Palestine, and Central NJ JVP.

Source: [Fighting Words](#)

