

Press release from the Swedish Dockworkers' Union, 30th June 2010

The Swedish Dockworkers' Union blockade of goods to and from Israel has ended. Altogether more than 500 tons of import and export goods were blocked.

At 24:00 on Tuesday evening the 29th of June the Swedish Dockworkers' Union ended the week-long blockade against goods to and from Israel. The undramatic end of the action meant that blocked goods were made available in the computer systems of the ports and in the deployment parks.

The Dockworkers' locals around the country have identified and blocked containers with a total weight of approximately 500 ton. Most of the containers have been identified in the port of Gothenburg, which is the largest port of the Nordic countries. The contents of the containers are unknown to the Dockworkers' Union, which has not actively searched for such detailed information but has merely ascertained that the goods have been on their way to or from Israel. In addition to the containers, large quantities of Swedish wooden export goods have been kept under blockade during the week.

The Swedish Dockworkers' Union will now initiate an evaluation of the blockade. The initial assessment is that the blockade has been successful. The practical implementation of the blockade has gone well and the action has gathered widespread international attention, which has contributed to refocusing media and public attention on the suffering of the Palestinian people subject to the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

The Dockworkers' Union finds it difficult to estimate the economical consequences of the blockade since Swedish trade with Israel is relatively limited. However, after our contacts with the involved shipping agencies and others, we estimate that a large part of the Swedish imports from Israel have remained in trans-shipment ports on the continent (mainly Hamburg, Bremerhaven and Antwerpen) or have been redirected to land transport.

Concerning the humanitarian conditions of the Gaza's civilian population, Israel's announcement of an ease of the blockade is, according to UNRWA, completely inadequate for the reconstruction of the area. In addition, the seaway to the port of Gaza is still kept completely closed.

At the end of last week the Turkish Dockworkers' Union Liman-Is decided that its members will no longer handle Israeli ships (more information at <http://www.sendika.org/english/>), which means that dockworker actions now involve both South Africa, USA (Oakland, California), Sweden and Turkey.

The Swedish Dockworkers' Union has also informed the Swedish Ship to Gaza-organisation and others, that if aid ships to Gaza wishes to depart from Swedish ports in the future, the union will organize teams of workers

to handle the loading on voluntary basis. The Dockworkers' Union will also work towards making the employers provide cranes, space and other necessary resources for such loading free of charge.

- The blockade has had a large impact by gaining world-wide attention and by becoming another civil initiative that increases the pressure on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza, says the President of the Swedish Dockworkers' Union, Mr. Björn Borg.

- I am satisfied that we have managed to carry out the task what we had undertaken by, to the best of our abilities, identifying and stopping seaborne trade with Israel for one week, says President Borg.

- However, in one important aspect we, along with a large part of the world, have failed. None of the two demands we presented to Israel have yet been met, which is a tragedy for the 800 000 children that are enclosed in Gaza, says ombudsman Erik Helgesson from the Swedish Dockworkers' Union Local 4 in Gothenburg.

- Israel still does not allow any independent, international evaluation of the boarding of the so called Freedom flotilla. The "easing" of the blockade of Gaza that Israel has spoken of, still renders any rebuilding of Gaza impossible. The seaway is still completely closed and many goods remain forbidden to deliver to the area, says Erik Helgesson, Ombudsman.

- It has been an educational week. We have received hundreds of encouraging letters, phone calls and e-mails. Over 6000 Swedes have shown their support on Facebook. We are very grateful for the support, ends Ombudsman Helgesson.

For more information about the ended dockworkers' action please contact the Swedish Dockworkers' general office in Stockholm or Local 4's office in Gothenburg:

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