



A Handbook for Blocking Ships

Following are suggestions based on our experience in the US. We hope that others will add from their experience, so as to expand the group knowledge.

1. Where to block. Until now, no group has tried to stop a ship from docking. The best blocking points seem to be the gates to the berths, through which there is entrance and egress, in order to block access for the workers. Sometimes a berth is accessible from a neighboring berth. Don't overlook any entrance.

2. The workers. The workers are our most important allies. Intelligence from inside and especially real time intelligence from workers is immensely valuable. If possible, bring off duty or former workers to the picket line. They can provide invaluable advice and information.

Workers also have the most to lose. They lose wages when they don't work. Perhaps they have no opinion about Palestine and are often forbidden by contract from acting on their opinion in any case. But they can refuse to work when the work site is disrupted. A union arbiter determines this when the workers are under contract. Otherwise, it is sometimes left to the individual worker.

Regardless of whether they have an opinion about Palestine, many workers will refuse to cross a picket line. Furthermore, if they are in contract negotiations or are dissatisfied with management, they may welcome an excuse to slow their work. Some picketers have suggested doing some fundraising to help offset lost wages, and to offer their time to participate in worker actions.

Learn to recognize who is a worker and who is management or other staff. Sometimes a union sticker on the car identifies them. You can take a photo and distribute it among the picketers. No one should cross a picket line, but workers are the focus of our actions.

3. Communication. A text alert system is an excellent way to mobilize volunteers on short notice, but you can be sure that supporters of Israel will subscribe, as well as the law enforcement. Social media are also useful, especially if information is being shared regularly. Our reports, information and narrative need to attract public attention as much as possible. It is good to cultivate press contacts and issue press reports, but the local media will come anyway, if the story is interesting.

4. The picket. Obviously, the number of picketers is of paramount importance. No need to tell you how to form alliances. Although the actions are local, ask your contacts across the country and across the world and especially in Palestine to push whomever they know to participate. Provide shuttles and transportation where possible. Parking is often not permitted in the port area, so shuttles can be important. Keep up the picket on all shifts until the ship leaves, and be ready to return

quickly if the ship tries to return while you are not there. Monitor ship movements at www.marinetraffic.com.

Bicycles are also very valuable. They can monitor all the gates and coordinate activity. They can also be walked on the picket line, taking up space and making the line look bigger. The same is true of signs, banners and flags, when the pickets are few. Bullhorns also magnify the presence and are good for group communication.

Find out the shift hours and set up a good picket at least an hour earlier. The picket needs to be loud and boisterous, especially when workers and their cars approach. The purpose is to give a good reason not to cross the picket line. However, if workers defy the line, we have to accept their choice. It is not for us to put ourselves in their position. Maintain the picket for at least several hours, so that the workers are not called to return when you leave. If workers get through, wait for them to go to lunch and then discourage them from returning. You may wish to use flyers for both the workers and the picketers. Music and a live band are a great help. Food and water is helpful, but some of us prefer to fast so that less water is needed and less need for toilet facilities, which may be far. Wear a hat and avoid overheating.

Assign a few people, especially off duty or former workers, to talk to workers arriving in their cars. Cheer loudly and yell "Thank you" when they drive away.

5. Law enforcement. Law enforcement personnel are generally permitted to lie and use force in their work, but we have rights. It is a big advantage to have legal counsel present, perhaps from friendly members of the National Lawyers Guild. Photo and video documentation can also be important, both for evidence and publication.

We have the right to free speech in public areas, but the police may try to clear a path for vehicles to enter and exit. Obviously, we have no objection to exiting, but the police may insist upon clearing an entrance path. Our job is to convince the workers not to use the path.

Often, the presence of police deters workers. Remember that workers also use picket lines. If they see a large number of police at a gate, they might prefer not to enter. We can encourage this by actions that attract the police. Larger numbers of them are needed when picketers are blocking the way for vehicles.

These suggestions are just a start. As you contribute to this movement, please also contribute your experience and advice to the handbook. Hopefully, this historic movement is just beginning to sweep the world.

FREE PALESTINE!