

Northport workers protest arrival of Israeli vessels
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About 100 members of Northport (M) Bhd Employees Union (NMBEU) today staged a protest against the arrival of Israeli merchant vessels at Malaysian ports.

The one hour protest at Container Terminal 1 which began at noon was led by NMBEU president Ahmat Abu.

Ahmat said Port Klang Authority (PKA) and port operators should be more sensitive and act collectively against the Israeli regime.

"We find it odd that Israeli merchant vessels can still dock at our ports despite strong government opposition to atrocities in Gaza and the bloody raid on a humanitarian vessel recently.

"We urge LPK, Northport, Westport and the Transport Ministry to bar Israeli merchant vessels from calling at our ports," Bernama reported him as telling reporters in Port Klang today.

Ahmat said the union would send a memorandum protesting the arrival of Israeli vessels at Port Klang to the Northport management today.

This follows similar moves elsewhere around the world in response to the attack by Israeli armed forces on a flotilla of six ships carrying humanitarian activists and goods to Gaza.

On May 31, humanitarian aid ship Mavi Marmara was attacked by Israel while on its way to Gaza.

At least nine activists were reported killed after the fracas that broke out when Israeli naval commandos boarded the Turkish-owned vessel.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak moved a motion in Parliament five days ago urging the international community to initiate legal action against Israel.

Elsewhere around the world, Swedish Port Workers Union (SPWU) announced that its 1,500 members had agreed to refuse handling Israeli goods and ships during the week of June 15-24 boycott.

"If an Israeli ship would come we would just leave it be and not work on it," Associated Press reported SPWU spokesperson Peter Annerback as saying earlier this week.

In a statement, the union said the reason for the boycott "is the unprecedented criminal attack on the peaceful ship convoy in Gaza."

The union had also urged other unions and organizations to join them through similar initiatives and called for Israel to be brought to justice for the attack and that it respects international law "and that the blockade of Gaza immediately lifted."

Annerback said it was still unclear how much the boycott is expected to affect trade between Sweden and Israel since the union still needs to identify cargos with Israeli origin.

Meanwhile, Bernama reported Transport Minister Kong Cho Ha as saying today that Israeli merchant vessels had to apply for permission from port authorities before docking at Malaysian ports.

He was commenting a newspaper report that Israeli merchant vessels docked at Malaysian ports on May 20 and June 7.

Malaysia does not have diplomatic ties with Israel.

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