

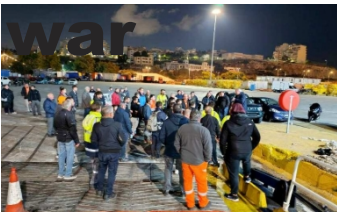
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13 May 2026 – Volle Lading Groep  
publication

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# Seafarers in the



# The largest secret of the Netherlands

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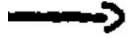
# FNV issues ultimatum Public transport strike The ports at a standstill?

On 31 March, the dockworkers in Rotterdam decided they wanted to strike against the government for (at least) five days. They called

are calling on other sectors to follow their example.

On 11 May, the leaderships of the FNV, CBV and VCP sent the government an ultimatum: if the government plans to dismantle social security are not withdrawn by 25 May, collective industrial action

will follow at the end of May,



so states the ultimatum. On 1 May, the FNV announced that public transport would be brought to a standstill in mid-June. Exactly when and for how long is not yet clear. The cuts to benefits must be withdrawn, said trade union official Henri Jansen: *“If that does not happen, we will go on strike in June and trains, buses, trams and the metro will come to a standstill both nationally and regionally.”* Clear language. A survey of NS staff showed that there is a very high willingness to strike.

It seems logical that dockworkers would join in and also walk out. Active dockworkers and trade union officials can start working on this now, among their colleagues and within the union. The government’s plans can only be stopped if different sectors join forces in the struggle.

## **Government on a collision course**

The government has made a few minor concessions, but the broad outlines of its hard-right policy remain intact. It is hard-right because it is ruthlessly attacking the hard-won gains and purchasing power of working people in order to serve the interests of big business. The response must be radical left: radical in its commitment to expanding the hard-won gains of working people and their purchasing power.

Benefits and healthcare are being dismantled and taxes are being raised. This is being done to free up funds for increasing military spending. All over the world, the big capitalists are preparing for war. Wars over spheres of influence, raw materials and strategic areas. They all want a bigger slice of the pie. War because the profit-



## ***Continued – FNV ultimatum and public transport strike***

hunger of the big corporations demands it.

As if this were not enough, nothing is being done about the housing crisis, environmental protection is being cut back further and further, and the PVV's racist asylum laws are being pushed through in one form or another – that is right-wing politics. Left-wing politics is fighting against the big capitalists and their government, who are stealing our income and dismantling our hard-won rights.

### **Radical left-wing response**

A genuine left-wing response cannot be limited to demanding that the government refrain from cutting benefits. Experience shows that, sooner or later, the trade union leadership will reach a 'consensus agreement', under which cuts will be made anyway. That is how the steady dismantling of the past few decades has taken shape. We need radical demands, and it cannot be just about benefits. Why limit ourselves to the fight against the dismantling of benefits – the rest of the demolition policy must also be scrapped. Not only that: we want improvements; there is enough money, it is just in the wrong pockets. Down with government policy, down with the government. Down with capitalism too: fighting endlessly against cuts is a

A dead end. Solidarity, putting workers' interests first, a society where everyone can play their part, where workers are free: socialism!

- Down with the government!
- Lower the retirement age, not raise it
- Hands off healthcare and social services
- Minimum hourly wage of 18 euros
- Tax the rich and big business
- Abolish the excess in healthcare
- Free home care and nursing homes for those who need them
- Lower housing costs
- Build affordable housing
- Stop preparations for war
- Stop the militarisation of society
- Workers do not shoot at workers
- For peace and friendship between peoples
- Make the polluters pay
- Save the environment from the profit-driven economy
- Legally unrestricted right to strike
- Unrestricted right to demonstrate – Ban on fascist organisations and their propaganda!



# Tenders for **war transport** Companies think only of profit

Just as bees are drawn to honey – or perhaps we should say: just as vultures are drawn to carrion – so transport companies flocked to the Ministry of Defence's first major tender for road transport. The small hall at the barracks in Huis ter Heide was packed to the rafters in early April for the first information session. The tender is worth up to 330 million euros. Companies can apply until 16 June. It concerns flatbed lorries and drivers, for a period of up to ten years. For exercises (2,000 journeys per year) and for wartime (300 flatbed lorries). The companies will receive payment for the services provided and, in times of crisis, compensation for the commercial work that can no longer be carried out.

## **'We do not work for war'**

Whereas companies think: 'we like to profit from war', workers should take as their starting point: 'we do not work for war'. Those wars serve only the interests of the big capitalists on both sides of the front line. Working people have nothing to gain from this; in the imperialist wars currently being waged, workers on both sides of the front line are the victims. Workers should not be shooting at other workers.

Later this year, tenders will be launched for transport, containers, bulk cargo, ammunition, passenger transport, livestock, hoisting and stevedoring. Staff, trade union branch committees and works councils in the port can oppose this.

- Stop the militarisation of the port
- No defence contracts for port companies! 4

# Invisible victims of war Solidarity with seafarers

We don't hear much about it, but seafarers in the Persian Gulf are also victims of the US and Israel's war against Iran. They are trapped in the war zone because safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz is not possible for most ships. At the start of the war, Iran did allow ships from 'friendly countries' to pass through, albeit sparingly. But now that the US is also blocking the Strait of Hormuz, the ships have nowhere to go. According to the IMO (International Maritime Organisation, part of the UN), 1,500 ships and 20,000 crew members were stranded at the start of May.

## **Targets on board and in the ports**

Some (work) vessels have sailed to ports in Bahrain and Dubai to allow crew members to return home, but this can be a dangerous operation because the ports and airports are also targets. Shipowners want to maintain a minimum

crew on board, so most seafarers (especially those sailing under a flag of convenience) are forced to remain on the ship.

It is beginning to resemble the situation during the coronavirus pandemic, when most crews were also not relieved.

Life on board is stressful. There is always the danger that the ship will be attacked. Three people were killed on a Thai ship. Shipowners also often put crew members' lives at risk. CMA CGM attempted to escape with the Everglade by switching off the transponder. The ship came under fire from Iran. MSC also ordered a number of ships to leave. In retaliation, Iran seized the MSC Francesca and the Epaminondas (also owned by MSC). They are now in Iranian ports. An Iranian ship was fired upon by the US in the Gulf of Oman: a hole was shot in the engine room and the ship was seized. The shipowners' profits take precedence over the lives of the crew. wages of the seamen.

## Principles of De Volle Lading

1. We champion the interests of dockworkers and the young people who will be working in the port through proactive demands.
2. We help organise the struggle for these interests, among other things through the fortnightly publication of De Volle Lading.
3. We operate democratically. Everyone can have their say. Friends who support the dockworkers' struggle are welcome.
4. We campaign for trade unions that fight for workers' interests in a militant and democratic manner.
5. We are independent, including financially. We only accept financial contributions if they are given without conditions.
6. We are open to ideas about a different society without the exploitation and oppression of working people – this guides our struggle.
7. We are working to strengthen international solidarity among dockworkers.

## Support De Volle Lading

Use this QR code to make a donation. Thank you in advance!



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**De Volle Lading** is a publication of the De Volle Lading group – by colleagues for colleagues in the port. At De Volle Lading, you can learn to fight against injustice and against the cause of injustice: capitalism. And please feel free to put some money in the pot to support us. De Volle Lading operates without subsidies – because we want to remain independent.

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A director of Nautilus (the seafarers' union) told the Nieuwsblad Transport that crews on Dutch ships are forbidden from discussing their situation with others. He also said that on many ships flying flags of convenience, the food situation is deteriorating.

### **Trump's bluff**

On 4 May, Trump announced the 'humanitarian' Project Freedom: with more than 100 aircraft and 15,000 military personnel, the US would escort ships safely through the Strait of Hormuz, thereby depriving Iran of its means of power. They mainly assisted a few ships that also provide military transport for the Americans, such as Maersk's Alliance Fairfax. During that operation, the CMA CGM San Antonio was attacked by Iran. A number of containers were damaged. Shortly afterwards, Trump announced that Project Freedom had been halted because 'the negotiations are moving in the right direction'.

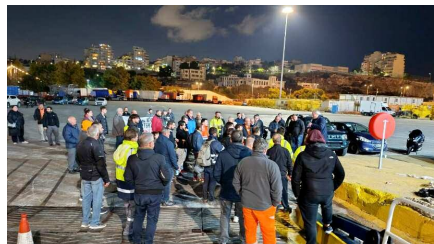
### **Solidarity action**

To the warring parties and the shipowners, the crews are insignificant pawns in their game of chess to gain

spheres of influence and profit. Only the seafarers and their supportive colleagues can ensure their own safety. PENEN (the Greek seafarers' union) set an example on 5 March. On that day, seafarers sailing between the Greek mainland and the Greek islands downed tools for a day. They demonstrated outside the Ministry of Shipping and the building housing the Greek shipowners.

The strike was directed against the Greek government, which is sending military resources to the war zone, and against the shipowners who are sending seafarers to war zones. This is how we stand up for the safety of our colleagues: not through armament, but through resistance to the war. On the same day, PENEN reached an agreement with the shipowners that any seafarer who wishes to do so will be repatriated and receive compensation equivalent to two months' wages.

An example worth following.



# The greatest **secret** in the Netherlands

The 1 May tradition is growing in the Netherlands. Worldwide, too, the number of people making 1 May their day of struggle is rising. Workers' Day, the international day of struggle for the working class, is being swept under the carpet as much as possible by the ruling class. In Amsterdam, some 18,000 people took part in the FNV demonstration – the largest ever. It became the Netherlands' biggest secret, as it was completely ignored by the media. Yes, a few images in the late-night news on the NOS, just for show.

The fact that there is a working class, with interests that are 100% opposed to those of the big capitalists: this must not be made public. The fact that effective workers' struggle is based on solidarity and internationalism must be buried by the selfishness and chauvinism of the right.

The 18,000 demonstrators at the FNV demonstration thought otherwise. It was the highest turnout ever for a May Day demonstration, since the FNV began organising them. This was particularly because the anger over the government's plans is immense, just as great as the determination to

fight against them. Down with the cuts to benefits and healthcare!

If the government has its way, every unemployed person and those unable to work will be on benefits in no time, you'll have to work until you die, care homes will be closed, the excess will be increased and domestic help abolished – and all that to send our young people off to an unjust war.

In Rotterdam, around 250 people demonstrated in the evening.

With banners, placards, flags and slogans, it was a particularly combative and lively demonstration. A link was drawn between the cuts and preparations for war: all European countries are making cuts in order to be able to increase military spending. Europe also wants to compete militarily with other imperialist powers such as the US, China and Russia.

'War is for the rich; the poor pay for the weapons and provide the bodies,' was the message in the speech delivered on behalf of the Red Dawn. And: workers do not shoot at workers.

For peace, for socialism!

