

Stand Firm ILWU with Ukraine

October 25, 2022



Back in March, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union took a fine position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Its Coast Committee called the attack "an act of aggression that endangers a population of more than 40 million people." In a press release, the union stated that "Effective immediately, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, with some 20,000 workers strong in 29 ports up and down the United States West Coast, will refuse to load or unload any Russian vessels or Russian cargo coming into or going out of all West Coast ports from Bellingham, Washington, to San Diego, California."

In taking this action, the ILWU continued its tradition of standing up for justice. In the past, it shut down ports to oppose the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It took action against the government of apartheid-era South Africa and in support of Palestinian rights. It wouldn't load military cargo to the forces that overthrew the elected government of Chile.

But now a number of ILWU members want to overturn their union's stand against aggression and punish the victims, the Ukrainian people. In a statement published on October 3rd on the site *Counterpunch* they called for port actions "to refuse to handle military cargo by dockworkers around the world." This is plainly designed to stop the ability of Ukrainians to defend themselves against a Russian military which has an almost unlimited supply of weapons.

The reasoning behind this call is based on a completely skewed history of what has been going on in Eastern Europe. Russia signed a treaty in 1994 to respect Ukraine's borders, yet it has invaded Ukraine with the intent of ending the country's independence and the Ukrainian identity. The signers of the October 3 statement, however, claim the war was "provoked by U.S./NATO aggression". We have many positions about NATO, some quite negative, but we have to note that the alliance's last significant expansion was in 2004.

Likewise, the supposed list of facts about a "U.S.-driven Maidan coup" that burned down a union headquarters or about "two newly-founded republics" or a brigade that killed 15,000 people in Ukraine's Donbas are misleading, distorted or completely false.

Working people in Ukraine are solidly behind defense of their country. Their unions spoke out the day after Putin's February invasion. They asked for "solidarity" the fight against "Russian Federation

aggression.” In April the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine wrote a letter to union supporters in the UK. After thanking them for support the Confederation explained, “Our brave medical workers save lives of civilians and soldiers. Our railway and transport workers evacuate people from battle zones and carry cargo despite the shelling.” It also wrote, “Ukraine needs assistance, primarily military, financial and humanitarian aid.”

We current, retired or former union members, encourage the ILWU to reject this attempt to repeal its correct and powerful stand on Ukraine.

Amina S. Ali

National Writers Union *

Bill Balderston,

retired teacher; organizer with the Oakland Education Association *

Mark Baugher

Portland, Oregon USA

Former member, USWA Local 13 *

Robert Casanta

Association of Flight Attendants - CWA (retired) *

Emmett Doyle

Carpenters Union Local 68 *

Arthur Esparza,
member Carpenters Local 30

Ann Eveleth

anti-war activist

former member SEIU Local 500*

and South African Union of Journalists

Bill Fletcher, Jr.

National Writers Union; AFGE *

Phil Gasper

Member AFT, Local 243 *

Brian T. Gibbons

Former Teamster member Local 495 LA and steward Local 392 CLE *

Howard Hawkins

retired Teamster, Local 317, Syracuse, NY *

Stanley Heller

AFT West Haven, CT #1547 *

AFT New Haven (Retired) *

Scott Houldieson

Union activist UAW Local 551 Chicago *

Resident Highland, Indiana.

Meghan Keane,

former PSC-CUNY member *

Patrick Kearney

(retired) Local 777, United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters *

Kieran F. Knutson

President CWA Local 7250 *

Traven Leyshon

president Green Mountain Labor council, *

district v-p VT AFL-CIO

Linda Mann

National Association of Letter Carriers (Retired) Branch 9 *

Bradley L Mayer,

former member, United Steel Workers of America *

Steve Ongerth

IWW (Bay Area General Membership Branch) and IBU (San Francisco Bay Area Region, ILWU affiliate) *

Bay Area, California

Frank Panzarella

retired Former President of International Association of Machinists and Aerospace workers Local 1990 *

Maria Constanza Pedraza

Retired Teacher, former executive board member United Educators of San Francisco (UESF), former member Hayward Education Association (HEA) *

Charles Post

AFT 2334/PSC-CUNY *

John Reimann

Former recording secretary, Carpenters Union Local 713 *

Co-chair, Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign

Rick Sprout

CSEA/ UUP (retired) *

New York State

David Turpin Jr.,

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 134, Substation Electrician *

Sherry Wolf

Member, CWA 1032 *

Cheryl Zuur

former president AFSCME Local 444 *

Ted Zuur

former member of HERE Local 2, San Francisco *

(*union name and locals are for identification only)

To add your name to this letter send an email to: StandFirmForUkraine@gmail.com Make sure to include your current or past union affiliation