

Port unions take action on Russian flagged ships

Rail and Maritime Transport Union/Maritime Union of New Zealand joint media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Tuesday 1 March 2022

The two unions representing workers in New Zealand ports say their members are reluctant to work Russian flagged ships in New Zealand ports and are looking at methods of protest following the outbreak of war.

Both New Zealand unions are affiliated to the International Transport Workers Federation, which has called for an immediate ceasefire in hostilities, for the conflict to return to the diplomatic level, and respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, following the military escalation in Ukraine.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson says workers may deliver letters of protest to the Captain of any Russian flagged vessels in New Zealand ports.

He says it is important to note any protest was not anti-Russian crews, but against aggression and war decisions at the leadership level.

Maritime Union of New Zealand National Secretary Craig Harrison says many Russian and Ukrainian crews worked in New Zealand waters as both nations had big maritime industries.

The Maritime Union had dealt with exploitation and mistreatment and assisted in the repatriation of crew members from both countries.

He says there is not a large number of Russian flagged vessels in New Zealand ports but there are some including large fish factory trawlers in ports such as Lyttelton.

Many 'Flag of Convenience' vessels had Russian and Ukrainian crew.

There would probably be issues around crew members wanting to repatriate to their home country, he says.

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