



## Post Peak Iberia

Posted by [Luis de Sousa](#) on June 14, 2008 - 9:55am in [The Oil Drum: Europe](#)

Topic: [Demand/Consumption](#)

Tags: [freight](#), [high fuel prices](#), [portugal](#), [road transport](#), [shortages](#), [spain](#) [[list all tags](#)]

*Updated 13-06-2008 at 19h00 (GMT+01h00).*

It all started in Spain, it quickly spread to Portugal and southern France. Lorry drivers are on the streets and on roads protesting against high fuel prices and bringing normal day life to a stand still.



*Spanish lorry drivers blocking main access roads to Madrid.*

*This is a crosspost from the [European Tribune](#).*

---

### [Update IV : 13-06-2008 19h00]

Spotty shortages of fresh goods, petrol and diesel are still enduring. This morning the radio reported that the route connections between Algarve and Andalucía were still being blocked, disrupting fuel supplies to the former region. In Spain fresh goods are still a problem in some supermarkets, with picket lines now blockading access to central warehouses that supply retailers. It is likely that these products will see price hikes during the following days, as supply falls from normal levels.

Up to this fifth day of strike there have been more than 1000 protesters detained by the police and 600 others have been fined for ill driving practices. But on the overall order seems to have been restored and life appears to coming back to normal for the regular citizen.

With 800 thousand people deciding the fate of almost 500 million, the news on the hauliers strike are fading away into background noise. Strikers tiredness and lack of interest by the media will

probably give the fatal blow to the protest, by Monday we'll know for sure.

Tonight Europe goes to bed with another institutional crisis in its hands. The big difference this time is that Peak Oil and the associated economic hardship won't wait.

---

### [Update III : 12-06-2008 17h00]

Life is slowly coming back to normal in Spain. A deal was struck between government and representatives of the vast majority of hauliers during last night, granting several fiscal and social benefits to the industry, but leaving diesel taxes untouched. The hauliers' associations behind the blockade reunited today after lunch and rejected the government's proposals, vowing to continue protests (the main claim for a minimum service fare remains unattended). Check striker's [demands](#) and the government's [offers](#) [hat tip [Migeru](#)].

The police is on the roads, clearing blockaded routes and facing the picket lines all around the country; there have been insistent reports of arrests throughout the day. Escort is being provided by the police to hauliers that request so, protecting lorries from raging blockaders. There's an all round improvement in traffic. Today's reported actions have been mainly of slow marches that didn't had much impact on the returning normality.

Stores are getting shipments again, although still rationing some high demand fresh goods. Factories are slowly coming back to operation, even if partially, and fuel is reaching filling stations again.

For tomorrow the Spanish association of taxi drivers is calling for a national strike, claiming a fare hike of at least 3 euro cents per kilometre. Negotiations will take place still today to avoid the stoppage.

---

### [Update II : 12-06-2008 08h30]

A few hours ago the Portuguese government yielded, striking a deal with protesting hauliers. While taxes on diesel remain in place, a package of measures was presented by the government that includes reduced toll fares and income tax exemptions, representing a substantial subsidy to the industry. Economic activities non dependent on Spanish trade routes should go back to normal in the next 48 hours.

Meanwhile in Spain a deal has been struck with some hauliers organizations, but not with those in action. Reports of violence are increasing, pierced tires, broken wind shields, cargoes destroyed; yesterday some lorries were set in fire during the night, resulting in serious burns on at least one driver asleep inside. The Spanish government is calling for "cogent" action by police forces against the picket lines.



*Click for more pictures of the blockade in Spain*

There are several hundred lorries stranded in Spain, many of them Portuguese. Those holding fresh cargoes are running out of fuel to maintain their goods. Speaking to the media some of the drivers stranded considered leaving their lorries on the road and simply return home by other means.

Elsewhere, Irish fishermen are [suspending the blockade](#) to the ports of Cork and Waterford. Belgian drivers are [planning action](#) against high fuel prices for the 19th and 20th of the month, considering a blockade of Brussels [hat tip [Migeru](#)].

---

### **[Update I : 11-06-2008 21h00]**

Lisbon ran out of diesel during the afternoon and petrol will run out still today. Milk, vegetables and fruit are becoming very scarce in stores.

Towing lorry operators have also paralysed south of the Tagus, impairing all on road assistance to motorists. Cars with engine problems are piling up on the road sides all across Alentejo and Algarve.

Farmers and fishermen were also in protest today in Spain, setting demonstrations in several cities of the country. TVE had some sad pictures to show today, with confrontations between the police and demonstrators resulting in numerous injured. At least Madrid is also feeling the same kind of shortages in supermarkets as in Lisbon; fresh meat is becoming an especially scarce product.

---

High oil prices are impairing one of the most important industries in Europe, road freight transport. Present diesel prices (of which about 60% are taxes) are eating the profit margins of lorry owners. Last Friday a strike started in Spain claiming for help from the government, with some 12 000 transport companies adhering.

During the weekend in Portugal lorry owners called a strike at a national meeting with the main intention of joining the announced actions by the Spanish unions. But at the same time the employed lorry driver's Union was (and still is) in negotiations with the Portuguese government. The Union called on its members to not go on strike so negotiations could continue. Feeling isolated the lorry owners transformed the strike into a blockade.

These owners are mainly small businessmen that operate with their own lorry, the big companies don't seem to be involved. Less than one fourth of the country's drivers are in the protest but the blockade is affecting most of them, the main connections to Spain have been blocked as so the major oil products storage facilities. The objective is clear: bringing the country to a halt.

In many blocking spots protesters are menacing to stone those who may try to break it. Old tyres have been set to fire at road junctions and boarder crossings.



*A blockade picket in Portugal.*

In Spain mobilization seems to be more deeper, yesterday several access roads to Madrid were blocked. As here, main border routes are being blocked, accumulating lorries in a kind of no man's land. In some places where bolder drivers tried to break the blockade the protesters managed to halt lorries and dumped their cargo. There are news of roads blocked also in the northern side of the Pyrenees, with French protesters mobilizing at least as far as Bordeaux.

*Video from Reuters.*

Yesterday things heated up between protesting drivers and those eager to deliver their cargoes. One protester was killed in Alcanena, Portugal when a driver tried to break a blockade at an

important freight route. Hours later a similar situation happened in Granada, Spain when a van hit a blocking picket also killing one protester. A video digest of Tuesday's protests can be found at [Euronews](#).

From a round on the media these are the main impacts to normal life:

- Traffic jams are affecting visibly commuter traffic in Spain with Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia being hardest hit.
- The National Guard has been escorting oil products convoys both to Madrid and Lisbon, densely populated areas that could rapidly dry out of fuel. This morning many filling stations in the northern suburbs of Lisbon had already ran out of diesel and 95 octane petrol.
- Diesel especially is becoming scarce in many filling stations all across the Peninsula. The Algarve seems to be on of the most hit regions, to where many people travelled taking the chance of an extended weekend to spend a few days in the southern warm shores.
- Many factories are closing operations for lack of supply of all varieties of goods. Car factories, an important sector in the Peninsula, are already paralysing, lacking parts to continue operations.
- Fresh goods are disappearing from the supermarket shelves. Yesterday fresh fish was already impossible to find.
- Milk will be unavailable in less than two days. Producers and storage facilities are dumping milk they can't send to the markets.
- Poultry producers are running out of feedstock. A massive die off could take place if new supplies don't arrive in the next few days
- Fuel supplies were suspended at the Lisbon airport, but up to the moment no flights have been cancelled. Air line companies have been filling their aircrafts at other airports in Oporto and Funchal.

Today other states will join the protest. Irish fishermen are set to blockade Cork's port and Scottish lorry drivers will take the road from Glasgow to Edinburgh on a slow pace, disrupting traffic in Scotland's most transited highway.

How all these actions can impact oil production in Saudi or Russia is hard to envision. Governments will either capitulate and reduce taxes (something that up to now no one seems willing to do) or recur to force and send the guard and the police against the drivers. No option is pleasant, and none will bring the international oil market back into balance.

I can't help feeling that for road transport these are the last breaths of a dying industry.

*Previously at TOD:E: [Post Peak Italy](#).*



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).