

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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## Europe

### **Lufthansa cancels fifth of flights due to pay strike by pilots**

According to a Reuters news agency report, Lufthansa scrapped almost a fifth of its flights August 7 following a 36-hour walkout by around 700 pilots at its CityLine regional airline.

The pilots' union Vereinigung Cockpit is demanding similar pay conditions for CityLine pilots to those of the flight crew at Lufthansa's main passenger airline.

Lufthansa—Europe's second-biggest carrier—eventually cancelled around 360 of its 2,000 daily services. The industrial action by the pilots severely affected nationwide airports, including Berlin, Munich, Hanover, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Cologne and Duesseldorf.

Pilots at CityLine operate around 400 flights a day and feed passengers into Lufthansa's Frankfurt and Munich hubs for long-haul routes.

Pilots at CityLine and another Lufthansa subsidiary, Eurowings, held two warning strikes in July. Earlier this month, Lufthansa reached a deal with the public services union Verdi, ending a five-day strike by Lufthansa's ground and cabin personnel over a wage dispute.

### **Traffic at Brussels airport grinds to halt following luggage handlers' strike**

Except for flights by Belgium's national carrier, striking luggage handlers stopped all traffic at Brussels' international airport August 11. The workers, employed by the airport services company Aviapartner, held a 24-hour strike in protest at pay and working conditions.

A union spokesman said that there was "no end in sight" for the industrial action, according to Reuters.

### **Staff vote for strike at Irish bookshop chain over pay**

Workers at Byrne's Bookstores, which has 21 outlets around Ireland, are to stage a one-day strike August 19 as part of an ongoing dispute concerning overdue wage increases.

According to an *Irish Times* article, the trade union Mandate says a 3 percent wage increase was promised to staff under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission in August 2006, but an increase due to workers last January has not yet been granted.

The union said an "overwhelming majority" voted in favour of taking industrial action when it balloted members.

### **British construction workers strike**

On August 7, some 350 building workers, employed on the construction of the new Langage power station near Plymouth in the southwest of England took unofficial strike to protest because 16 of them are being laid off. The workers are employed as contactors on the site by the French company Alstom.

One of the laid-off workers, Brian Mills, said that he accepted the job on the basis that that it was to be a six-month contract. Mills said that the workers began to picket the other workers on the building site as soon as they found out about the loss of their jobs.

The strike ended later that day following talks between the workers and trade union representatives. The deal resulted in the workers receiving a one-off payment but remaining laid-off.

## Middle East

### **Workers at Egyptian gas station stage sit-in**

According to *Almasry Alyoum*, around 200 workers at Talkha Gas Station, Dakahlia governorate, staged a sit-in in protest at the refusal of the station board of directors to carry out legally agreed measures. These included appointing more workers for duties including

nightshift, hazards and travel allowances along the lines of other regional gas stations.

Workers demanded a meeting with the governor and called on the Labour Office to increase the annual leave by seven days and to increase monthly bonuses from 50 to 75 percent.

The governorate assistant general secretary Major General Omar Nabeih went to the station and met with the striking workers. He said a memo of workers' demands would be sent to the governor and called on them to end the sit-in, but they refused.

### **Egyptian teachers strike over pay and threaten more action**

In Beni Suef, teachers staged a strike August 6, in protest at the Ministry of Education's insistence on applying a special pay scale only for those who pass official tests.

The teachers threatened to stage an all-out strike on the first day of the academic year. Two of them told *Almasry Alyoum*, "We reject this kind of pay scale and call for joining us to the localities."

### **Africa**

### **Struggle continues for sacked Namibian diamond polishers**

The struggle is continuing for 130 workers who formerly worked for Lev Leviev Diamonds (LLD) Namibia as diamond polishers, until they were dismissed for going on strike last June.

The workers were handed their dismissal notices on July 7 and 8. The hearing of the workers' appeal against their dismissal is currently taking place.

The management of LLD Namibia is said to be intending to re-employ some of the workers, on the condition that they start as new employees and undergo a three-month probation period.

National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) has been discussing the workers' case with management. LLD is one of 11 firms registered with the Namibia Diamond Trading Company, a joint venture between the Namibian government and De Beers.

### **Nigerian teachers' union suspends strike over salary structure**

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) has announced the suspension of the strike action begun on June 28 over non-implementation of the Teachers Salary Structure (TSS).

The NUT said that the dispute would not be resolved

until all teachers were included in the TSS, but that they were suspending the strike indefinitely "as a mark of honour and respect to all state governors for their intervention." The governors have given assurances that they will bring in an upward review of teacher's salaries of some 27.5 percent.

The decision by the NUT would appear to accept the position of the Federal Government that teachers' salaries cannot be decided on a national basis and have to be determined through negotiations with the state governments.



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