

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Irish airline workers strike

Workers employed at Aer Lingus have set a date for industrial action, November 24, if the company attempts to implement its plan to cut 1,245 jobs.

The union SIPTU has called on Aer Lingus management to re-enter talks as shop stewards establish strike committees to prepare for the dispute.

National Industrial Secretary Gerry McCormack said he had informed shop stewards that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions had written to the secretary general of the Taoiseach's (prime minister's) department, Dermot McCarthy, asking for a meeting of the National Implementation Body to seek a resolution to the dispute. "We are available to attend a meeting if asked and we would urge the company to do so and help avert a potentially very damaging dispute," he said.

Workers have voted by a wide majority to take action at three major airports, Dublin, Cork and Shannon. Fourteen days official notice of industrial action has been served.

Italian transport workers strike

Mass transit and rail workers across Italy staged a strike November 10. This was followed by a wildcat protest by staff at Alitalia which forced the national airline to scrap dozens of flights.

Around 200 Alitalia flight attendants and pilots staged a surprise protest by blocking the crew entrance at Leonardo da Vinci airport and preventing staff wanting to fly from entering the terminal.

The striking workers oppose a plan to salvage the bankrupt airline by cutting routes and jobs. According to the *Associated Press*, "Roads were jammed as many people took cars or motor scooters to work instead of public transportation. The walkout by railway and transit workers was meant to push the government and

transport companies to open contract renewal negotiations.

"Further misery awaited travellers at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport, where a separate, unannounced protest by some Alitalia flight attendants and pilots caused delays and cancellations."

Alitalia said a total of 124 flights were cancelled due to the strike, as well as a work-to-the-rule job action by pilots. The airline predicted a further 50 flights would have to be scratched.

Industrial action by railway workers was scheduled to run until 9 p.m. and the mass transit strike was due to end at midnight.

The striking airline workers voted to continue their protest through November 11.

Adding to the transport chaos, Italy's civil aviation authority said Ciampino, Rome's second-largest airport and a low-cost hub, would remain closed for a further day, November 11, as workers removed a Ryanair plane that made a hard emergency landing Monday after hitting a flock of birds. The plane damaged its left gear and ended its run leaning on the left wing. Two crew members and four passengers suffered minor injuries.

UK: Bus staff strike disrupts schools

A one-day strike by Stagecoach bus staff was held November 11 over pay. Aberdeenshire Council said 4,000 pupils were affected.

Stagecoach said 160 staff from elsewhere in the UK had arrived in the north of Scotland to help provide a strike-breaking force. The millionaire owner of Stagecoach, Brian Souter, was among those drafted in to drive a bus in Aberdeen.

Further action is planned for November 21 and 24.

UK port workers demonstrate to prevent job cuts

Hundreds of workers employed at the Dover Harbour Board will take part in a rally and demonstrate on November 15 and will go out on a 48-hour strike the following week to demand that their jobs not be outsourced.

Officials at Unite, the UK's largest trade union, are reportedly angry that the port's chief executive has stated they are not prepared to negotiate on their plans to outsource work, but only inform the union of their proposals.

Teachers strike in Nigeria

Primary school teachers in Enugu State, southern Nigeria, took strike action on November 10 in protest against the authorities' failure to increase their wages in line with the decisions of the state government.

Teachers from several schools across the state carried placards in a demonstration through the streets of the capital city.

State officials, including the permanent secretary of the State School Board, called on the teachers to return to work but did not explain what would be done about their grievances.

Truck drivers on strike in Botswana

Truck drivers employed by Unitrans in Botswana are on strike to oppose their poor conditions and low wages. The drivers travel long distances from home without receiving any allowances for meals or other expenditures.

The drivers say they have been raising their grievances with management since the year 2000 to no avail. "People who have been working here for several years are paid P3,500 [US\$443] or P3,600 [US\$456]" per month according to an employee interviewed by Gaborone based newspaper, the *Reporter*.

One driver said, "A guy in South Africa makes my monthly salary in a week and we are wondering what the difference is." Another added, "When you are first hired they will give you three months [probation] but you can [continue] for several years without being confirmed while they keep extending your probation."

Liberian public works employees hold sit-down protest

Employees of the Liberian Ministry of Public Works held a sit-down strike that continued for several days.

The employees had earlier voiced their anger over "the level of corruption" within the ministry and called for the immediate removal of Minister Donzo, who presides over it. They accused Donzo of hiring family members and giving them government scholarships.

On November 10, the employees resolved to return to work after receiving assurances that the issues would be addressed.

Blind workers on strike in South Africa to demand payment of arrears

Employees of the Itireleng workshop for the blind in Ga-

Rankuwa, in the North West Province of South Africa, are on strike to demand payment of their salary increases from April this year. Only a few of the employees have received any increase at all.

Casual worker Emily Matsemela has been employed in the workshop for more than 20 years. She accused management of withholding her pay and of wanting to get rid of her. Another worker complained, "We've been working for such a long period at Itireleng, but we are being ill treated."

Women doctors protest in Morocco

Women doctors are protesting at the decision to insist that they take up posts anywhere in the country. Previously they were assigned to posts within 65 miles of their homes.

The ministry of health has threatened to suspend their salaries after the doctors held a number of sit-in protests at the ministry.

"We'll go on campaigning even if they stop our wages," said Maha Benjelloun. "We have no choice."

Dr. Benjelloun, a nephrologist, has two young children, but has been sent to work in Oujda which is 440 miles away from her home in Casablanca.



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