

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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

Italian airline pilots carry out work-to-rule against buyout

On November 13, pilots employed by Italian airline Alitalia continued their campaign of protests in opposition to a proposed buyout by Italian Air Company (CAI), a group of Italian investors. The airline was placed in special administration last August.

The group made a binding offer last month for the air passenger transport activities of Alitalia. Under the terms of its offer, CAI would take on 12,500 Alitalia workers while shedding some 3,250 jobs.

The work-to-rule was organised by several unions opposed to the buyout. It led to the cancellation of 42 domestic and international flights at Rome and Milan airports.

On November 14, 60 flights in and out of Rome were grounded. The following day some 40 flights between Rome and Milan were cancelled.

A group of Alitalia employees also staged a wildcat strike the previous week. The action led to cancelled flights and passengers were forced spend the night at the airport, facing delays and long queues.

Striking electronic workers in Poland sacked

Striking workers at the South Korean-owned Dong Yang Electronics in Mława, Poland continued their action this week as management hired replacement staff in an attempt

to break it. The 200 strikers, members of the Polish metalworkers union NSZZ Solidarnosc, have been in dispute for more than a month in pursuit of increased wages, a minimum wage and better conditions.

Last week management decided to end the contacts of 180 strikers and have hired workers to replace them.

On November 14, the workers held a demonstration demanding that basic wages be increased by 9 percent for all workers and for the minimum wage in the company to be set at 1500 PLN gross (€400). They called for the increase to be retroactive to March 2008 and for the reinstatement of all workers fired for striking.

Throughout the dispute, management has refused to negotiate with NSZZ Solidarnosc, despite demands by the local authorities and Ministry of Labour.

Port workers at Dover strike to oppose privatisation of jobs

On November 20, 330 workers at the port of Dover in England ended a 48-hour strike. The workers are members of the Unite trade union and were protesting plans by Dover Harbour Board to privatise 190 jobs. The board recently issued a statement saying that it was to end “an unsustainable monopoly position as the sole supplier of landside services to the customer ferry operators.” This includes workers employed in mooring ships, handling goods and trailers and security activities.

The strikers voted 83 percent in favour of industrial action on a turnout of 95 percent.

According to a Dover port spokesman, the board has been training nonunion staff for several weeks prior to the strike.

They also began to train six Gurkha soldiers to moor ships, on the basis that they could be used to help break strike action. On November 8, the Gurkhas withdrew from the training once they became aware that they could be used as a strike-breaking force against the port workers.

A further three-day strike is set to begin November 27. Dover is the busiest ferry port in Britain.

Angolan port workers to take strike action against low pay

Over 2,000 workers at the port of Lobito—the second biggest port in Angola—will take all-out indefinite strike action from November 22. They are demanding an increase from their present wages of US\$240 per month to US\$800.

Lobito is 700 kilometres (430 miles) south of the Angolan capital Luanda. The country has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Union leader Manuel Sa told *Reuters* that the workers should benefit from increased business at the port, which he said had grown by 70 percent over the last two years.

Museum workers strike in Sierra Leone

Workers at Sierra Leone's only national museum (located in the capital, Freetown) went on strike from November 14, after the expiry of a 21-day ultimatum period they had presented to the government. They are demanding payment of eight-months' pay arrears and improvements in their conditions of work.

A night guard at the museum told *panapress*, "Even if our salaries are very small, the authorities should give it to us promptly... Why should we wait for eight months without pay? How do they expect us to live and take care of our families?"

According to a report from the new agency, workers were sitting around their workplace displaying placards that read, "We demand ours eight months' salary" and "No salary, no work."

Teachers stage one-day national strike in Tanzania

Thousands of Tanzanian teachers took part in a national strike on November 17. According to *This Day*, teachers were prepared to continue their action until the New Year "to coerce the government to respect their rights." Teachers are pressing the government to meet six demands: "promotion, payment of arrears, re-registration of teachers who have been removed from the payroll, the establishment of a Teachers' Joint Staff Council and the involvement of the Tanzanian Teachers' Union (TTU) in assessing their cash claims."

Many teachers are currently paid between \$60 and \$100 a month and have to take on second jobs in order to survive. Pay often arrives late and arrears owed to teachers have reached 24.4 billion Tanzanian shillings (US\$20 million).

The strike was called off by the TTU after one day, when the government obtained a court order declaring it illegal. This was despite the fact that only a few days earlier, the Court of Appeal had overturned a decision by the High Court's Labour Division, barring teachers from going on strike.

Chief Secretary Philemon Luhanjo told *This Day* that the ruling of the Court of Appeal did not legitimize the teachers' strike. He said that teachers were public servants bound by rules for resolving labour disputes as stipulated in the Public Service Act of 2003. He added that the government would not hesitate to take punitive action against teachers engaged in the work boycott.

Strike action planned to begin on October 15 was also blocked by the government through the High Court. Teachers blamed the TTU leadership for calling off the strike and since then many have been engaging in a "go-slow."



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