

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

27 March 2009

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

Strike in Portugal to protest government economic policies

On March 20, tens of thousands of workers in the public and private sectors in Portugal took strike action and demonstrated in the capital, Lisbon, in protest at the economic policies of the governing Socialist Party.

A reported 200,000 took part in opposition to efforts to make working people bear the burden of the global economic crisis, including job cuts and the diminution of workers' rights.

Workers at airport operator AENA strike in Spain

Spanish air traffic controllers, firemen, maintenance workers and administrative staff took strike action for one hour on March 25 to protest government plans to privatise the state-owned airport operator AENA that manages 47 airports in Spain.

The action was called by the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) trade union and was held between 9 and 10 a.m. local time. Member of the UGT and USO trade union also took part in the industrial action.

Teachers strike at London school to oppose change to academy status

Members of the NASUWT teachers' union took strike action on March 19 at the Royal Docks Community School in Newham, London, to protest plans to turn the school into an academy.

The action resulted in the closure of the school, while staff also leafleted parents at a number of local feeder primary

schools.

Being granted academy status would mean a different employer running the school and changes to nationally agreed upon pay and conditions. Since being first introduced in 2000, the publicly funded but privately run academy schools have been a central plank of the Labour government's drive to privatise large sections of the state education system.

Glasgow: Protest against nursery and primary schools closures

On March 21, several hundred protesters marched through the district of Drumchapel in Glasgow, Scotland, in opposition to city council plans to close primary and nursery schools. Glasgow City Council wants to close 25 primary schools and nurseries across the city.

Doctors strike at hospital in central Poland in pay dispute

Doctors at a hospital treating infectious diseases in the town of Torun, central Poland, took strike action on March 23. The doctors are demanding a pay increase of 1,000 zloty (229 euros) after rejecting the 10 percent offer from the hospital management.

The stoppage was organised by the Doctors' Trade Union of Poland, who had also held two "warning strikes" the previous week. According to reports, half of the doctors at the hospital participated in the action.

Riot police in France remove protesting postal workers from Finance Ministry

On March 24, riot police were mobilised to remove dozens of protesting French postal workers from the French Finance Ministry. The workers had been involved in a protest to

demand an increase in pay and no job losses. The employees from the Hauts-de-Seine region of Paris have been on strike for 10 weeks.

Workers at Russian steel plant resume hunger strike

Sixteen employees at the Zlatoust Steel plant in the Chelyabinsk region of Russia resumed a hunger strike on March 23. A previous five-day hunger strike ended on March 15.

The workers are protesting job losses at the plant and cuts in pay. They are demanding that their wages be increased by two-thirds, to around 12,000 roubles, and that management adhere to normal working hours.

Most of the staff at the plant is paid less than 6,000 roubles (\$174) a month, following cuts imposed by management. Management has slashed the workforce at the plant from 8,000 to 1,200 and has cut wages by up to 45 percent.

Large-scale cuts and job losses are being made in the Russian metallurgical industry, with the government predicting that up to 100,000 jobs are set to be lost this year.

Liberian rubber workers strike over lack of pay

Around 3,000 workers on Liberia's biggest state-owned rubber plantations have been on strike for several weeks to demand payment of salaries owed to them.

A spokesman for the strikers at the Guthrie plantation in Western Bombi County, Rich Fobway, told *Monrovia* (AFP) that the senior senator for the region, Laha Lassana, had visited the plantation and promised that they would be paid in full if they called off the action. The strike was ended, but the workers were not paid.

Fobway told the paper that when Lassana returned to the plantation on March 20 he was taken hostage by the strikers. He said that when the police arrived the senator tried to escape. "Senator Laha Lassana took off his two pistols and opened fire on the crowd. Three persons were seriously injured, and they are now undergoing treatment."

Lassana has denied shooting the strikers.

Nigerian health workers strike over pay

Health workers in Ogun State, southwestern Nigeria, took all-

out strike action on March 20. They are demanding the implementation of the Consolidated Tertiary Institutions Salary Scheme (CONTISS). The state government had promised to implement the scheme at the beginning of 2009, but has yet to deliver. General hospitals in Ijaye, Abeokuta, and Ijebu-Ode are affected by the strike.

The state commissioner for health told *Vanguard* that although the state government had initiated the new salary structure it had not been implemented, mainly because of the global economic meltdown.

An all-out strike by health workers began on March 20 in the 21 local government areas in Adamawa state, in eastern Nigeria. The action, called by the Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria, was triggered by a circular that directed local government employers to stop making payments under an enhanced salary scheme, called HATTIS IV, to non-technical staff. The scheme was first implemented four months ago.

Spokesman for the union, Malam Nasiru Digil, told *News Agency of Nigeria* that the Health Ministry was responsible for the strike. He pointed out that the union had written to the ministry two weeks ago on the matter, but they had failed to respond.

He said that in Mubi North alone, no fewer than 130 non-technical staff were affected, leading to a drastic cut in their salaries.

The strike has caused a delay in a mass vaccination of people against cerebro-spinal meningitis in rural areas.

Nigerian nurses strike to protest police detention of colleague

Nurses at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Umuahia, Abia state, took indefinite strike action on March 24 to protest the police detention of their colleague after she allegedly administered drugs to a patient who died a few hours later. Nurses marched on the police headquarters.

Edna Nwokonta, department head in Nursing Services Division at the hospital, told *Vanguard* that "the detained nurse merely carried out her duty by administering the drugs prescribed by the doctor."



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