

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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

Finland: Action by air traffic controllers

A two-hour walkout by air traffic controllers in Rovaniemi and Tampere April 29 resulted in delays to mainly domestic flights, according to yle.fi.

The strike was in response to the planned closure of the Northern Finland Air Navigation Centre (EFPS) announced earlier in the day.

The airport and aviation services company Finavia stated that from 2010 the air traffic control centre in Tampere would take care of the tasks of the control centre in Rovaniemi.

Bulgaria: Steel workers continue struggle for plant

More than 500 workers from Bulgaria's troubled steel-maker Kremikovtzi protested in downtown Sofia April 30, according to novinite.com.

The workers continue to demand their unpaid wages and that the steel plant be rescued. They initially protested before the Ministry of Economy and Energy, causing severe traffic jams. There they were read a statement of the economy minister, Petar Dimitrov.

After no one from the ministry met the protesters, they headed for the square in front of the parliament, where they played 19th century Bulgarian revolutionary songs.

The protesters have said they have information that 1,500 workers would be laid off almost immediately,

followed by another 1,000 by the end of May. This would mean that only about 2,500 workers will be left in Bulgaria's largest steel-maker.

Ireland: Nurses to vote for strike over pay cut

The May 6 *Irish Times* reports that nurses at Cork's second largest hospital are expected to vote in favour of strike action in a ballot by the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO).

The ballot follows a decision by management at the Mercy University Hospital to cut premium payments to staff. The hospital's 400 INO members began casting their votes in a four-day rolling ballot for possible work stoppages from May 5.

INO industrial relations officer Michael Dineen said the nature of the ballot required a lengthy time frame in order to allow all nurses to vote. Union officials have described the actions of management as being in clear breach of employment law.

Mozambican striker shot dead by police

Building workers employed on the construction of the new Mozambique national stadium in Maputo have been on strike to demand an almost 50 percent increase in pay. It is the second strike of construction workers in less than three months. According to *O Pais*, the strikers are "upset over low wages, no overtime pay and perceived mistreatment by the project's Chinese management".

On April 29 two strikers were shot by police. Johane Eliote Matlombe, 22, died in hospital the following

day.

Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique reported that the shooting occurred when a policeman had drawn a line in the sand and told the strikers that anyone who crossed the line would be shot dead. “But when the police arrested one of the group, the strikers crossed the line in solidarity with their colleague. The policeman in question was as good as his word and opened fire, shooting two of the strikers”.

The police have promised to pay for the funeral, but according to the paper, Matlombe’s uncle, Mussagi Abdul has said, “This mustn’t end here. He’s not a dog that can just be killed and buried”.

On May 5 a spokesperson for the police told the press that criminal proceeding have begun against the policeman who fired the fatal shot. There is currently no information on the condition of the other victim.

The government of Mozambique embarked on the project of building the new stadium in the hopes of reaping benefits when South Africa hosts football’s FIFA World Cup in 2010. It is said to be inviting all the Portuguese-speaking teams to use the stadium for training purposes.

The government has received millions of dollars in grants from the Chinese government to finance the work, which is being carried out by a Chinese contractor.

South African bus drivers continue their strike

Over 400 Johannesburg Metro Bus drivers have been on strike for almost two weeks. They are members of the South African Municipal Workers’ Union (SAMWU).

The strikers condemn the current practice of paying almost all drivers the minimum rate, no matter how experienced they are, and are demanding promotion to other grades. SAMWU branch secretary for Johannesburg, Dumisani Langa, told the *Mail and Guardian*, “Within job categories there are three notches—minimum (pay), medium and top notch—and most drivers are receiving the minimum, no matter the number of years of experience.”

Langa told the paper that “apart from salary issues we

will be calling for the removal of one senior manager we believe is corrupt.” He alleged that the union had proof of someone “who bribed police officers to assault our shop stewards and members during the 2007 strike.”

Negotiations between the two sides have continued throughout the dispute. Metrobus claims that it has made a new offer. SAMWU is threatening to call for a solidarity strike by all its members if further talks prove fruitless.

Nigerian doctors start strike action

A strike of doctors in Lagos State, Nigeria, began on May 4 after the government failed to address their demands. The Guild of Doctors had given the state authorities a 10-day ultimatum of their intention to take action.

During a warning strike held earlier, the state government had pleaded with doctors to return to work and promised to attend to their grievances. The main demands are for implementation of the consolidated salary structure (CONTISS) for the state’s medical staff—to bring their salaries into line with their counterparts in other states—and provision of essential materials that are currently not provided.

Assistant Secretary Dr. Salau Tajudeen told *THISDAY* that his members “will not go back to work no matter what, until the government implemented all their demands.”



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