

# Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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

## Greece: Power workers threaten summer strikes over jobs

Workers at Greece's biggest electricity company, Public Power Corp (PCP), say they will strike next month to demand the hiring of an extra 7,000 employees to reduce the risk of accidents.

Four workers have died at PCP since the beginning of the year.

Its employees will stop working overtime for two weeks from June 29 and hold rolling 24-hour strikes after July 20.

## UK: Pilots set for strike action over job cuts

Pilots and other airline staff working for British Airways (BA) may take strike action over the threat of pay cuts and compulsory redundancies.

The chief executive of BA, Willie Walsh, has set a deadline of June 30 to agree to pay cuts for the airline's 40,000 staff. He has refused to rule out compulsory redundancies, which could lead to strike action across the summer season.

Ground handling staff, members of the Unite union, have already rejected a pay cut by a margin of six-to-one.

BA says it has been particularly badly hit by the economic downturn. Compared to this time last year it is carrying about a fifth fewer business and first-class passengers, which BA has traditionally relied on for half of its revenues.

## UK: Defence research specialists vote for strike action

Specialists at the defence research and technology company QinetiQ have voted in favour of industrial action over the

company's decision to impose a pay freeze for 2009, according to a report from [prospect.org.uk](http://prospect.org.uk) on June 1.

The ballot of Prospect's 2,000 members resulted in a 72 percent vote in favour of strike action, while 85 percent voted in favour of taking industrial action short of a strike likely to include a ban on overtime working. QinetiQ employs over 7,000 staff in the UK and operates over 40 sites with major facilities located at Farnborough in Hampshire, Malvern in Worcestershire and Boscombe Down, Wiltshire.

## Ireland: Cape Clear ferry strike over pay

Around 60 people gathered in support of a picket by the crew of Cape Clear ferry at Baltimore in west Cork on June 4 as they staged a strike over pay cuts.

The *Irish Times* reported that four crew members of the Cape Clear ferry service staged a one-day strike over pay cuts that the SIPTU union has branded "illegal." The dispute involving the crew of the Naomh Ciarán II is to be referred to the Labour Relations Commission.

The owner of the ferry, Ciarán O'Driscoll, won the five-year €1.2 million state tender in 2007 to operate the year-round service from March 2007 to 2012.

## Norway: Pilots to strike over pensions

Forty-eight pilots are threatening to strike unless current negotiations are resolved over their pension entitlements. The potential action could leave ferries, cruise ships and other merchant vessels stranded.

The pilots' association is part of an umbrella federation that represents a range of unions with thousands of members. On June 4, [lloydslist.com](http://lloydslist.com) reported that this association has said the strike, which is due to begin by the end of this week, could exceed seven days.

## **Russia: Unpaid wages drive Siberian workers to hunger strike**

Workers at a paper mill in Siberia owned by oligarch Oleg Deripaska protested over unpaid wages June 8.

Reports cited by Reuters said 63 people had started hunger strikes and two dozen others were demonstrating against the management of the paper mill on the banks of Lake Baikal.

The demonstrators were also considering blocking a motorway if their demands were not met. A week before, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had intervened when protesters blocked the highway.

Deripaska's company, Basic Element, owns 51 percent of the paper mill, which was mothballed during the last quarter of 2008.

Oksana Gorlova, spokeswoman for Basic Element's timber arm, Continental Management, which manages Baikal paper and pulp mill, said the company had recently transferred 87.6 million roubles (€2 million) to pay all wage arrears accumulated since February, when the factory had been due to reopen.

The mill employs 2,000 people and is the main employer in Baikalsk, which has a population of around 17,000.

Forbes magazine last year estimated Deripaska's wealth at \$28 billion.

## **Egypt: Journalists protest press merger**

Some 400 journalists from the state-owned *Al-Ahram* and *Akhbar Al-Yom* newspapers demonstrated this week in front of the headquarters of the two organisations. Later they marched to the Shura Council to protest against its recent decision to merge the weekly *Al-Taawun* and monthly *Al-Zeraaiya* into *Al-Ahram* and the daily *Al-Masaiya* into *Akhbar Al-Yom*.

Signatures of journalists from the two organisations have been sent as part of a petition requesting President Hosni Mubarak stop the merger. Journalists believe the integration of these publications will add to their financial difficulties.

According to Amani Dorgham, a journalist at *Akhbar Al-Yom*, the publications were losing at least LE5 million per month.

## **Striking Nigerian steel workers hold up traffic**

Striking Nigerian steel workers employed by the Ajaokuta Steel Company (ASL) stopped traffic over the Niger Bridge on June 3, the day after a worker was shot dead by police during a

similar protest.

Over 2,000 workers were reported to have driven their trucks onto the bridge in the early hours of the morning. Their vehicles were still blocking the way at 2:30 in the afternoon.

The strikers told the *Vanguard* they were protesting over the non-payment of their salaries for 10 months and were angry at the refusal of the federal government to implement the agreements with their union.

## **Cocoa exports from Ivory Coast halted by strike**

Around 6,000 striking port workers in the Ivory Coast have halted exports of cocoa from the capital, Abidjan, for the last week. The port handles 40 percent of the country's total cocoa exports.

The workers are striking over pay. Riot police with tanks have stationed themselves at the port.

Ivory Coast is the biggest cocoa exporter in the world, responsible for about two fifths of the supply of the chocolate ingredient. Cocoa prices for September delivery went up as much as \$34, or 1.2 percent, as a result of the strike.

## **Zimbabwean lecturers strike over pay and conditions**

Lecturers at Masvingo Teachers College, one of Masvingo province's leading teacher training establishments, are on strike over low salaries and poor conditions. The lecturers allege that they have been paid only half their salaries since January this year, and are demanding payment of the arrears.

Students at the college have so far missed two weeks of studies due to the strike. One of the lecturers said, "Since January, we have not received our full salaries. We know the college is diverting our salaries to other things. But we are tired of being sacrificed."



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