

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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

Port workers in Dublin, Ireland continue strike

Some 30 striking port workers in Dublin, Ireland continued their eight-week strike action against Marine Terminals Ltd this week. The dockworkers, members of the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (Siptu), began industrial action on July 3 to oppose plans by the company to impose compulsory redundancies and attacks on pay and conditions. The action began when the firm withdrew from talks and imposed nine compulsory redundancies. At the rally one port worker claimed that she was being offered just €4,000 redundancy pay after working for the company for 11 years.

In an attempt to break the strike, Peel Ports, the UK company that owns Marine Terminals, has brought in workers to replace the strikers. On Monday, several hundred port workers and their supporters attended a rally to protest Marine Terminal's actions. The rally began at the East Wall Road, Ringsend and proceeded to the offices of Marine Terminals at the port. Once at the company offices, a delegation of the workers staged an occupation there for around an hour.

Bus drivers strike in Chester, England in pay dispute

Bus drivers employed by First bus in Chester, England struck in a dispute over pay on August 21. The staff first balloted for industrial action on August 11 following the imposition of a pay freeze. The action lasted for three hours. Management at First attempted to break the strike by recruiting management to drive buses.

Strike action and an overtime ban was originally planned to go ahead last month but was prevented after management gained an court injunction in order to make it illegal. They had cited irregularities in the strike ballot procedure.

Enterprise Liverpool workers set to take industrial action this week

Some 600 refuse and street cleaners employed by Enterprise Liverpool are set to begin industrial action today following a breakdown in negotiations between the company and trade union representatives. The action has been called by the Unite and GMB trade unions in a dispute over pay and working conditions and will begin at midnight.

The strike is to involve employees in a number of departments taking different forms of action for several hours throughout the day. These include an overtime ban, work to rule and selective strike action. Refuse collectors, street and highway cleaners and street light maintenance staff are involved.

The trade unions claim that Enterprise Liverpool is responsible for the breakdown in talks and allege that the company also reneged on an agreement that averted industrial action earlier this month.

Essex fire fighters begin ban on overtime and rest-day working

On Wednesday members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Essex in southeast England began a ban on overtime and rest-day working. The action was in opposition to plans by the Essex fire authority to shed jobs and impose other changes to working practices. In July members of the FBU in Essex voted 79 percent in favour of industrial action short of a strike.

Referring to the Essex fire authority, a local FBU representative said this week, "Unfortunately, they are still determined to remove 44 frontline firefighters' jobs, but talks will continue."

Fire Brigades Union members in South Yorkshire to ballot for industrial action

Members of the Fire Brigades Union in South Yorkshire, England are set to ballot for strike action to oppose the introduction of new shift patterns. Firefighters have demanded the withdrawal of plans to turn 9-hour day shifts and 15-hour night shifts to 12-hour day and night shifts.

According to the FBU, 744 staff have been threatened with dismissal unless they accept the changes.

In June FBU members began a ban on overtime and also refused to carry out “detached” duties—firefighters going to other stations to cover staffing shortfalls.

Transport workers end strike in Cairo, Egypt

On August 20, public transport workers in Cairo, Egypt ended a 48-hour strike. The action involved thousands of workers and had a widespread impact in the city, resulting in increased congestion.

The employees returned to work after Minister of Manpower Aisha Abdel Hady agreed to a number of their demands and to consider others.

According to the *Daily News*, “About 80 percent of the drivers, ticket collectors and mechanics staged a sit-in at more than 14 public transport garages for two days, refusing to operate more than 700 buses. The workers were protesting low wages and harassment by traffic police. They also demanded to be exempt from traffic fines except for major violations.”

A worker employed at the Nasr City garage told the newspaper, “We ended our strike yesterday after the government fulfilled 60 percent of our demands and promised to consider the rest within 15 days. They agreed to lift traffic fines off our meagre salaries and put them on the state budget instead.”

The worker also added that transport workers were generally opposed to the three official transport trade unions. He stated that transport workers “insist on withdrawing confidence from the three unions that represent us, even if we had to start an independent union.”

Striking doctors return to work in Zimbabwe

After a two-week strike, hospital doctors in Zimbabwe have returned to work. The strike was organised to back their demands for a monthly salary of US\$1,000 and a US\$500 allowance. Currently they receive US\$170 and an allowance of US\$48. Nurses had joined the action.

Striking junior doctors in some of the outlying areas have been sacked in spite of a resurgence of cholera cases. The ongoing cholera epidemic killed over 4,000 people last year. According to the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association president, Dr. Brighton Chizhande, the doctors had been prevented from seeing cholera patients and told they must reapply for their jobs.

Striking academic staff in Nigeria to continue industrial action

Staff belonging to the University of Jos Chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) pledged to continue their strike action this week. The nationwide strike by ASUU members, resulting from a contract dispute, is now entering its third month. ASUU is one of four trade unions involved in the dispute.

This week the union warned parents not to send students back to the University of Jos if it were to announce a term resumption date prior to the industrial action being called-off.

South African platinum miners stage unofficial strike action

Around 4,000 platinum miners employed by mining contractor Murray and Roberts Cementation (MRC), at the Aquarius company Kroondal and Marikana operations, began unofficial strike action on Sunday evening.

The workers are members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The NUM had reached an agreement with MRC for a 10 percent wage increase on August 21 and notice of strike action was withdrawn by the NUM. The original union demand was for a 15 percent rise. Although inflation in South Africa is falling, the current rate is nearly 7 percent.

MRC have now dismissed those workers taking unofficial action and plan to rehire staff on August 27. According to MRC Managing Director Henry Lass, those dismissed will be able to reapply for their jobs.



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