

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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

Germany: Pilot strike proposed

According to Reuters, Air Berlin pilots of the unit LTU “have been urged to go on strike, Cockpit, the German Association for Commercial pilots” said on August 31.

The union has called for a 16-hour strike to protest against a move “to replace pilots working for LTU with those working for Air Berlin,” Cockpit said in a statement.

Ireland: Court injunction restrains striking Coca-Cola workers

The *Irish Times* reports that the soft drinks corporation Coca-Cola secured high court injunctions on September 1 restraining striking workers at its plants in Dublin and Tipperary town.

Interim injunctions were granted by Justice Liam McKechnie against Stephen Carberry, Albert Gannon and Garry McCarthy, restraining them from placing pickets at the entrance of Coca-Cola premises at Huntstown Business Park, Cappagh Road, Ballycoolin, Dublin, or from interfering with its operations.

Brian Allen, Peter Connolly and Adrian Conlon were similarly restrained regarding pickets and interference with the entry and exit of lorries at Kiely’s Distribution Ltd, Henry Street, Tipperary town.

The company intends to make changes to its delivery by outsourcing transportation. This will entail closing Coca-Cola’s warehousing and distribution centres in the republic. The plan would involve the loss of 50 jobs this month, with at least a further 37 going in the next six to nine months.

The *Times* also reported that on September 1, the SIPTU union said one of its members had been taken to hospital with arm injuries after being hit by a car while on the picket line at the distribution centre on Ballycoolin Road, Finglas.

Ireland: Teachers to ballot on strike action against unprecedented cuts

The Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) says a ballot on

industrial action may be necessary, according to the *Irish Times* on September 1. Never before, claims the ASTI, have teachers and the education service faced cutbacks on the scale proposed. A recent report suggested total education cuts of over €745 million.

“A significant minority group within the ASTI is already campaigning for the union to take militant action in response to the cutbacks,” said the *Times*.

It added, “Sources within the ASTI say that a vote for industrial action appears likely unless the forthcoming talks between the government and the education partners see what one called ‘major progress in reversing the attack on teachers and the public service.’”

Ireland: DIY workers strike

Workers at 4Home Superstores took strike action September 1 after the collapse of redundancy talks with the Labour Relations Commission (LRC).

Twenty-four workers are set to lose their jobs under the planned closure of the 4Home Superstores outlets in Mitchelstown and Fermoy in north Cork.

According to the *Irish Independent*, “the DIY and garden equipment retailers now also face the threat of protest action over plans to axe their outlet at Anacotty in County Limerick.”

The union Mandate has accused the company of refusing to compromise over its initial position that the employees—some of whom have worked for the company for almost 40 years—will get only statutory redundancy.

Ireland: Port workers continue eight-week dispute

Around 40 workers at the cargo handling company Marine Terminals Limited (MTL) continued their eight-week-long industrial dispute against the threat of compulsory redundancies and attacks on pay and conditions on August 28. With the help of supporters, and using five 5.2 metre boats, they attempted to block ships entering and leaving Dublin Port.

The SIPTU union said that during the protest no ships entered the MTL berth, which can accommodate up to five vessels. A Stena Line vessel was delayed for a time in the main channel because of the protest, the *Irish Times* reported. “The floating picket was a declaration of intent by the community,” said one of the protesters, “that the community backs the strikers.”

Iran: factory workers stage sit-in over unpaid wages

The Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network (IWSN) reported that workers at the Wagon Pars factory in Arak, central Iran, went on strike August 25 over unpaid wages.

The IWSN wrote, "Following months of tension with the factory's owners and managers, the workers staged a sit-in protest by sitting on the ground, locking the factory gate and preventing any managers from entering the factory.

"The managers of Wagon Pars, a company manufacturing train rolling stock, first reacted to the strike with threats and intimidation. They also tried to disperse the workers. The protesting workers, who have not been paid their fixed and regular wages for several months, were not intimidated and did not leave their positions in the factory. Threats to sack the few remaining contract workers, threats of legal action against the permanent and long-standing workers, threats to let the riot police enter the factory, and other threats common to all managers in Iran, were among the managers' other threats."

Depending on their wage level, the workers of the factory are already owed between approximately 1,500,000 (\$1,516) to 2,800,000 tomans (\$2,831) for several months' unpaid wages.

Formerly state-owned, Wagon Pars was recently privatised. Over half the company's shares are now owned by the Iran Khodro company.

According to the company's clerical staff and workers, government loans worth more than 500 billion tomans (\$505.66 million) were supposed to have been spent by Iran Khodro management in renovating subsidiary companies. This has not taken place.

Israel: Jerusalem municipal workers launch general strike

On September 1, Jerusalem municipal workers declared a general strike in a dispute over the work terms of thousands of employees.

The city's 7,500 employees are protesting against the employment of around 3,500 workers via subcontractors, in order to pay them lower wages and deprive them of social rights and job security.

During the strike, garbage will not be collected and public offices will be closed. City inspectors, transportation workers and special education staff will be on strike as well, according to *Haaretz*.

Most city schools will be operating as usual due to the municipality's request that parents fill in for janitors and kindergarten assistants.

The workers are also demanding an end to "invasive" investigations by the city's comptroller and human resources division. "Even the dark regimes of Eastern Europe did not use such methods," said union chairman Zion Dahan. "They send out private investigators, follow people, photograph them. Why do they want to humiliate people?"

Zimbabwean teachers strike

Around 90,000 Zimbabwean teachers began nationwide strike action this week, corresponding with the start of the new school term. The primary and secondary school teachers' unions are pushing for improved

salaries and allowances. Tendai Chikowore, president of the largest union, the Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA), told the press that teachers don't want to "live in abject poverty and perpetual debt."

She said ZIMTA's claim was for a basic monthly salary of US\$300 and an allowance of US\$100. Currently teachers earn around US\$150 a month. From July the coalition government began paying government employees in US dollars on a regular basis, in an attempt to create stability.

The government says it needs around US\$8 billion from international donors over the next five years to restore the economy. So far little of this money has been forthcoming.

Ugandan teachers take action over pay for exam marking

More than 100 teachers in the Ugandan district of Arua have refused to release the results of the P5 to P7 primary grade exams they have been marking.

The teachers were offered sh10,000 (US\$5) by the district authorities for the week's work. They have rejected this and are demanding sh100,000 (US\$50) for the work and state they will not mark papers again without being paid in advance.

Strike action by Kenyan census workers

Census supervisors in the Malindi and Magarini districts of the Coast Province of Kenya began strike action last week over non-payment of allowances. The action involved around 300 supervisors and senior supervisors. The current census of all Kenyans, which began last week, includes a controversial question on the ethnic origin of Kenyans.

The supervisors were joined by about 50 drivers as they lobbied the district statistics officer, Pauline Musila, at her Malindi office. A senior supervisor told reporters, "We have spent our savings and are grounded.... We have received nothing."

Striking South African platinum miners meet to discuss dispute

Around 20,000 members of the National Union of Miners were due to meet this week to consider the employers' latest offer. The miners employed by Impala Platinum have been on strike since August 25.

South Africa produces 80 percent of the world's platinum, which is used in catalytic converters in cars to reduce pollution and as a precious metal in jewelry. According to the *Times* of South Africa, the company is currently losing over R9 million (US\$1.16 million) per day as a result of industrial action.

The striking miners are seeking a 14 percent wage increase, plus transport and housing allowance payments. Speaking to Reuters Press Agency, the miners' chief negotiator said, "There is nothing new, we are still far apart. Our demand is for a 14 percent increase, and the company is still at 10 percent." David Brown, Impala's chief executive, has threatened to sack some of the workers if they do not return.

Miners working for Anglo Platinum have rejected an offer of 9-10 percent increase and are demanding 11 percent.

Last week 4,000 miners working for Murray and Roberts Cementation (MRC) and contracted to the Aquarius platinum company were dismissed, after rejecting a wage deal reached between the NUM and MRC and taking unofficial action.



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