

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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

Further one-day national strike announced in Greece

Civil servants and private sector workers in Greece have called a further 24-hour strike in opposition to the government's austerity measures for May 5.

It will be the third joint strike organised by the civil servants union ADEDY and the General Confederation of Greek Labor (GSEE) since the start of the year.

The announcement came as top German and International Monetary Fund officials sought to agree a higher €135 billion bailout for Greece, as fears of "contagion" spread across Europe. The package is dependent on even more draconian austerity measures being imposed by the Greek government, which has already cut social spending by 10 percent, hiked up the retirement age by two years, and announced plans to eliminate two months' wages in the public sector.

The last week has seen strikes continuing across the country. On Tuesday, public transport workers in Athens held rolling strikes, halting buses, trams, and metro transport for six hours.

The same day seamen at the Piraeus harbour struck in protest at the government's decision to lift restrictions on foreign cruise ships as part of moves to "liberalise" the labour market. Dockworkers blockaded the port, preventing passengers and crew on the cruise-ship Zenith from making their scheduled sailing to Croatia.

In addition to strikes by teachers and radio technicians, Air Force pilots organised a "sick-out" in protest at the government's new tax measures. The pilots are forbidden to strike, but hundreds of Air Force training flights had to be abandoned as pilots claimed they were too unwell to fly.

Airbus workers in France strike

Workers employed at three Airbus plants in France have been taking a series of rotating strikes this week in a dispute over

contracts.

The workers in Toulouse, Nantes and Saint-Nazaire, are protesting moves to impose a pay offer of just 1.9 percent. There are also concerns over the impact on jobs of Airbus plans to shift production of its medium-haul A320 to Germany.

Production of the Airbus's A330 and A340 long-haul jets has been disrupted as thousands of employees downed tools and blocked the delivery of parts. A full strike is scheduled for today.

Management is offering a 1.9 percent salary increase for this year, but the unions want a 3.5 percent increase.

Strike hits Glasgow's cultural and sporting facilities

Workers in Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG) are taking strike action today against plans to impose a wage cut of up to 10 percent on almost 200 of their number, and a pay freeze for the remainder.

The CSG was established as a charity, run at "arms-length" from Glasgow city council so as to take advantage of tax breaks and attract private sector involvement. It is responsible for running the city's museums and galleries as well as community and sporting facilities. A further strike is planned to coincide with the General Election on May 6.

Carrefour workers in Belgium to strike

Workers employed by the French retailer Carrefour in Belgium are due to strike today over restructuring plans.

In February the group announced it would cut 1,672 jobs and close 21 stores in Belgium by the end of June.

University and further education staff in London announce strike date

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at several universities and Further Education Colleges in London are to take one-day strike action on May 5 in a dispute over job losses and cuts in funding.

Lecturers at King's College London, University College London, the University of Sussex and the University of Westminster voted in favour of the protest. They are to be joined by staff at 11 Further Education colleges.

The Brown Labour government has announced plans to cut higher education funding by almost £1 billion, threatening job losses, courses and campus closures.

A London-wide protest is to be held on the day of the strike at King's College.

Flower workers in Kenya issue notice of strike

The Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (KPAWU) has issued notice of strike action beginning May 18. They are demanding a 50 percent pay increase. Agricultural exports are Kenya's biggest foreign exchange earner, amounting to Sh70 billion (US\$0.9 billion) last year, of which flowers made up around half.

The KPAWU union is affiliated to the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), of which it is the largest affiliate. Francis Atwoli, COTU secretary general, called for the workers' grievances to be met and added, "We are going to involve our members in the aviation industry at the Embakasi airport who handle flowers not to package the Kenyan flowers for export if our demands are not met."

Custom workers' planned strike in Namibia deemed illegal

Around 2000 custom officials, members of the Namibia Public Workers Union (NAPWU), were due to begin strike action Monday, April 26. They oppose the result of a recent pay re-grading exercise and say they are the lowest paid workers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

However a court ruling was issued April 26 stating the strike was unlawful and must not go ahead. Some custom officials did take strike action for a few hours, but overall custom posts were open. The strike was disowned by NAPWU, who claimed there was no dispute between the employers and union.

Sierra Leone teachers lay down gauntlet to government

Teachers unions in Sierra Leone are preparing to submit a package to the government calling for an improvement in their pay and conditions. Their current pay and conditions package was negotiated in 2004. Augustine Garvey Karim of Secretariat of the Education for All announced he would tour the country to mobilise the teachers in support of the new package presented to the government.

The teachers are hoping to repeat the improvement in pay and conditions won by health staff, who took 10 days of strike action at the end of March.

South Africa cement workers strike

Around 1000 workers at the cement and aggregate producer Lafarge began strike action last week. The company has plants across the country. The workers, members of the National Union of Miners, are seeking an 11 percent pay increase and improvements in housing and shift allowances.

South African paper delivery workers strike

Around 300 delivery workers employed by Allied Publishing took strike action last week. The workers belong to the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA), whose spokesman, Ernest Dlamini, explained, "The dispute is over workers not getting paid for overtime worked. Instead the company proposed to give a worker a day off for overtime work."

He added that Allied Publishing were looking at the restructuring and franchising of its Pretoria depots. Dlamini feared this might affect job security. The company sought a court interdict to halt the strike action.



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