

# 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.

## Romania: Daewoo Mangalia shipyard workers begin strike

One thousand workers began industrial action Monday at the Daewoo Mangalia shipyard in southeastern Romania. Some 3,000 workers are employed at the shipyard.

The workers are demanding improved pay and working conditions, including a Lei 300 (€71) rise and a yearly bonus. Management has offered an increase of Lei 40 (€9.50) according to media reports.

Daewoo Mangalia filed a court order in an attempt to prevent the action after declaring the strike illegal.

## Fiat unions in Naples, Italy, sign productivity deal

The Italian FIOM trade union, which represents workers at the Naples Pomigliano plant of auto firm Fiat SpA, called for an eight-hour strike this week, set to be held on June 25. At this stage FIOM has refused to sign a new accord that has already been agreed by four other unions. The new agreement is based on productivity increases including moving to 18 shifts a week from 10 and Saturday night work.

Fiat SpA is demanding the new accord be signed as a condition for it to invest in a new Panda car model in 2011. The firm plans to invest €700 million (US\$853 million) in the production of the new car.

Fiat said this week the agreement needed to be accepted by all five unions. The firm was scheduled to meet in Rome this week with the four who have already signed. Company Chief Executive Sergio Marchionne stated that the factory would be closed if the new model was not produced there, and that the plant had to be globally competitive. The current Panda car is produced at a factory in Poland.

FIOM is not opposed to the productivity increases but supports them being implemented under an existing agreement. FIOM Secretary General Maurizio Landini said this week, “Fiat can reach its productivity goals for Panda using the national contract”.

## Ireland: Leitrim County Council to strike over private contractors

Over 100 general services staff at Leitrim County Council in Ireland are set to take industrial action at the end of June over a unilateral decision by the local authority to replace cleaning staff with private contractors.

A series of meetings between the SIPTU trade union and the council has failed to resolve the ongoing issue.

SIPTU’s branch organiser, Raymond O’Reilly, said this week that if the county council states it will negotiate and change its plans, the union will withdraw its strike notice.

## Russian dockworkers threaten industrial action over wages

Reuters reported June 10 that Russian dockworkers at the St. Petersburg and Tuapse ports, owned by billionaire Vladimir Lisin, may go on strike next month if wages are not increased.

According to a local trade union spokesman, “The dockworkers have launched the procedure for a collective labour dispute”. The spokesman added that consumer prices have risen by 8.5 percent in St. Petersburg last year, while wages increased by just 5 percent.

St. Petersburg is a key port for thermal coal exports to the UK, Germany and Scandinavia, while the Black Sea port of Tuapse handles coal shipments to Turkey. Were the action to take place it would be the first at ports since 2007.

## UK: Journalists set to strike at *Morning Star*

Journalists employed at the *Morning Star* newspaper are planning to strike from June 20 in an ongoing pay dispute. The paper has been the organ of the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain since 1966 and was preceded by the *Daily Worker*.

According to the *Guardian* newspaper, “Editorial staff represented by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) want an extra £1,000 a year to supplement their current £19,000 salaries plus some form of recompense for working anti-social hours.

“In November 2009, the paper’s management—representing its co-operative owners, the People’s Press Printing Society—offered £1,000. But it was part of a three-year deal that staff believe will lead to very small rises in the second and third years. There was also no recognition for anti-social working hours. So the offer was rejected”.

The *Guardian* report stated that staff have been offered £900 in a two-year deal and “some form of recognition” for anti-social hours.

### **Egypt: Health and agricultural workers protest low wages**

Demonstrations took place outside the People's Assembly in Cairo on June 13, as some 300 female Health Ministry employees staged a sit-in to protest low wages and other grievances. The workers are also demanding they be paid every month instead of every three months, as is currently the case.

Ministry employees say their monthly salaries were capped at LE230 some 20 years ago. One protester told *Al Masry Al Youm*, "We worked for the National Council for Population for 20 years before being incorporated into the Health Ministry in 1996. In spite of the fact that insurance payments are deducted from our salaries, the ministry has failed to sign permanent contracts with us, just as it has refused to give us periodic raises since 2008. We're not even entitled to tenure".

Another demonstration of 300 workers employed by the Mechanized Agriculture Company was also held at the Assembly. The employees were demanding tenure and pay raises. The workers, who received a monthly wage of only LE300, say they have not been offered tenure even though they have worked for the company for 15 years.

### **EgyptAir pilots and flight attendants stage sit-in**

On June 9 some 500 flight attendants and 150 pilots employed by the national carrier EgyptAir staged a sit-in at their union headquarters to demand wage and bonus increases and parity with their colleagues at other airlines.

According to *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, the staff claim that a salary increase scheme was first proposed more than 14 years ago but that management have not implemented it.

### **South African riot police continue assaults on World Cup security staff**

On Thursday South Africa police fired a stun grenade in order to break up a protest by security personnel who are demanding payment for duties performed at Cape Town's World Cup stadium.

The brutal police action is the latest against protesting security staff and stewards at World Cup venues. In the latest assault police reportedly arrested at least 10 people, according to an independent television account.

The protests, which began on Sunday, have resulted in World Cup organisers calling on the police to take over security and stewarding at four World Cup stadiums.

### **Bank workers strike in Mozambique**

Bank workers employed by the National Bankworkers Union and working for the micro-finance bank Procredit began strike action Tuesday. They are striking to force negotiations over their grievances, which include failure to pay overtime, sacking workers without cause and the demotion of some staff.

The strike closed branches of the bank in Maputo, Manica and Namputa provinces. Following announcement of the strike on Monday, the bank issued a letter saying they were prepared to talk to the union. According to *allafrica.com*, the strikers were dubious of the letter's validity because it bore no company stamp. They vowed to continue the action.

### **Water workers in Zambia lay down tools**

Water workers belonging to the Zambia Water and Sanitation, Engineering and Allied Workers Union (ZWASEAU) and employed by the Nkana Water and Sewerage Company walked off the job Tuesday in protest at the imposition of a 5 percent pay increase. Other civil servants and employees of the Ministry of Local Government and Housing have been awarded a 15 percent pay deal.

The ZWASEAU said it expected other water utility workers to join the strike.

### **Cement workers in Uganda take industrial action**

Around 1,000 workers at the Tororo cement factory in Uganda took strike action on June 10. Their action was the result of management's failure to implement a mandatory wage review policy. The majority of the workers are contracted to the cement factory and for three years have seen no increase in pay or improved conditions. A wage review was only being awarded to a minority of workers and management employed directly by the company.

The contract workers claim they have to do the most dangerous work and are not provided with protective gear. This recent stoppage was the second such action in as many weeks.

As well as the stoppage, workers attempted to blockade the nearby highway, a major route way to Kenya.

### **Delta state academic staff strike in Nigeria**

Academics in the Colleges of Education Staff Union and the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics employed in Delta state polytechnics and education colleges in Nigeria took strike action on Monday.

The action was the latest in an ongoing campaign to force the state government to implement the Consolidated Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Academics Salary Structure, a newly agreed salary structure.

### **State hospital workers strike in Adamawa, Nigeria**

Hospital workers in Adamawa, Nigeria, began strike action Monday, June 14, after the failure of the state government to meet an agreed pay award. The action was called by the NLC trade union.

According to the *Daily Trust*, the union stated the strike began “as the state government didn’t respect the earlier agreement reached with the NLC that salaries of local government staff should be a first line charge to avoid undue delay in payment of salaries”.



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