

# Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

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## Greek ferry, railway and media workers in 24-hour strike

Ferry workers in Greece began a 24-hour strike Wednesday. The action led to hundreds of ferries being cancelled and held up at the port of Piraeus—Greece's largest port and the main port from Athens to the islands.

The action went ahead despite a court order being declared against the strike. Only two of fourteen trade unions representing port workers supported the strike. One of the unions initially involved in the dispute, the Panhellenic Seamen's Federation, an umbrella organisation, adhered to the court order.

According to press reports, riot police were on standby at Piraeus but were not used against the strikers.

Strikes were also held Wednesday at the state railway company and at government-owned news media groups. The strikes are the latest against the austerity measures being imposed by the PASOK government of Prime Minister George Papandreou.

## Italian workers strike to protest government austerity measures

Workers are set to strike throughout Italy today in opposition to the government's planned austerity programme. The action, called by the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), the country's biggest trade union body, will involve both public and private sector workers. Two of Italy's other trade union organisations, the CSIL and the UIL, are refusing to support the action.

The action has been called to protest the austerity programme of the government of Silvio Berlusconi, which is seeking to cut public expenditure by nearly €25 billion over the next two years. Up to 400,000 jobs, mainly part-time and temporary, are to be slashed in public services while the salaries of those remaining in public service are to be frozen or cut.

Workers set to strike include pilots, flight attendants and ground crew. Rail workers are also stopping work for four hours as are bus, metro and tram employees. Ship and ferry transport will also be hit by the industrial action. Dockworkers are also scheduled to strike as well as highway, car rental, breakdown service and driving school staff.

## London Underground maintenance staff dispute with Transport for London

Maintenance workers, members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union, began a 48-hour stoppage on Wednesday, in an ongoing dispute over proposed changes to jobs, pay and conditions. The strike proceeded after Tube Lines, a privatised firm that currently administers maintenance, lost a High Court plea to prevent the strike.

The staff are in dispute with Transport for London (TfL) and voted to support industrial action by a margin of nine to one. The workers struck on the Northern, Piccadilly and Jubilee lines of the network.

Prior to the action the RMT rejected a 3.7 percent first year pay offer from the company. The deal offered was to have been backdated to April 2010, with another 0.5 percent increase depending on productivity changes.

TfL claimed that the strike had resulted in "no significant impact" on its operations. The union disputed this, stating that delays occurred on the District, Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines due to signal faults left unrepaired and drivers refusing to move trains for safety reasons.

## Leisure centre staff strike in Glasgow

Last week staff employed at Tollcross leisure centre in Glasgow, Scotland held a three-day strike in opposition to a pay freeze. The workers are members of the Unison, Unite and GMB trade unions and are in dispute with Culture and Sport Glasgow.

Culture and Sport Glasgow is planning to implement a 10 percent wage cut for 150 workers in Glasgow as well as a pay freeze, cuts in public holidays and overtime rates.

The strike is the latest in a dispute that has led to the closure of some of the city's museums and tourist attractions, including Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the Gallery of Modern Art and the Burrell Collection.

The Tollcross centre was selected for strike action as a swimming championship was being held there. Management responded by hiring strikebreakers and the event went ahead as planned.

## Teachers strike at sixth form college in Cambridge, England

Teachers at a sixth form college in Cambridge, England staged a four-hour strike on Thursday to protest plans to increase their

workload. The staff are members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT). Around 40 teachers held placards on a picket line including the slogans, “Every student matters” and “Education cuts don’t heal.”

Management at Long Road Sixth Form College have informed teaching staff they will all have to teach an extra 90-minute lesson in 2010/11. Teachers also fear that up to 10 teaching jobs could go as a result of cost-cutting measures.

A spokesman for the Cambridgeshire NUT said, “Subject teaching demands planning and preparation, marking, admin and report writing on top of the contact time. An increase in subject teaching hours would result in a significant addition to an already unacceptable workload. National workload surveys suggest teachers already work an average of over 50 hours a week.”

### **ArcelorMittal steel workers strike in Algeria**

Over 6,000 workers steelworkers at the ArcelorMittal owned El-Hadjar steel plant in the northeast town of Annaba began indefinite strike action Monday in support of a pay demand. They say they will stay out until they achieve their increase or the plant is taken into government control. The plant, which had previously been state owned, produces around three quarters of a million tonnes of steel a year.

### **South African power workers threaten strike action**

Around half the Eskcom workforce of 32,000 power workers represented by the South African National Union of Miners (NUM) are set to strike in pursuit of a 14 percent pay rise and housing allowance.

The state-owned company has made an 8 percent offer. Lesiba Seshoka, NUM spokesman, told press: “I hope it won’t come to a strike,” adding that the union was still negotiating. Two other unions, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa and Solidarity, represent the rest of the workforce and say they may join the action if the NUM goes ahead.

Strike action and the resultant power cuts would have a big impact on the South African economy.

### **South African pharmacy strikers accuse charge police discrimination**

Workers belonging to the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union and employed by the pharmaceutical chain Dis-Chem began strike action May 27. They are demanding a 15 percent pay increase along with other demands.

The union accused the police of intimidation when police arrested 23 striking workers at Midrand last Friday. They were held over the weekend but released Monday without charge. Management has also

been photographing workers on picket lines, which the union says is an attempt to intimidate workers.

### **Nigerian resident doctors strike**

A faction of doctors belonging to the National Association of Resident Doctors were due to begin strike action this week in support of the implementation of the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure and for immediate payment of arrears accrued since January.

### **Nigerian health workers strike enters second week**

The strike by health workers in the northeastern Nigerian state of Adamawa has now lasted for more than a week. The strike is over non-payment of arrears going back two years. Babangida Philibus, a leader of the strike, told the *Daily Trust* newspaper that they would stay out until their demands were met.

### **Nigerian Oyo state teachers to strike**

Teachers belonging to the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) in Oyo state have threatened strike action over the state government’s non-implementation of the 27.5 percent teachers’ enhancement salary scale. All other southwest states have implemented it. NUT leader Jamiu Idris told the press: “Government at all levels must consider their teachers’ demand as genuine enough against the backdrop of the essential services they render.”



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