

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

9 July 2010

## Ukraine: aluminium workers protest unpaid wages

Workers employed at the Kiev Aluminium Constructions Plant held a protest last week near the Ukrainian Government House after not being paid for nine months. The workers last received a paycheck in September 2009. Management has also cut work shifts.

Around 50 workers marched from central Nezalezhnosti Square to the Government House.

More than 20 appeals have been sent to the president and prime minister's offices, the Ministry of Labour and Labour Rights Inspection, as well as local and regional prosecutors.

At the end of June, Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Union of Ukraine and its Kiev regional branch called protests.

The union has around 200,000 building workers organised in construction, cement, metal, building materials and glass producing, building machinery companies, architect bureaus, vocational schools students and teachers from all regions of Ukraine.

## Ireland: Former printing company workers demand redundancy pay

About 20 workers, formerly employed by Brunswick Press in Dublin, picketed the company's headquarters Wednesday to demand their statutory redundancy entitlements. The staff were made redundant in March, but not paid any money including owed holiday pay and redundancy notice.

As a result of a deal struck by trade unions in March, the workers lost their full redundancy entitlements. The Dublin Printing Group of Unions and Brunswick Press management agreed a deal that required to pay 50 percent of the entitlements. According to the *Irish Times*, some workers are owed €40,000 and others up to €2,500.

## Nurses in Dingle, Ireland, vote to strike

Nurses in Dingle, Ireland, voted for industrial action in a dispute over staffing numbers and security issues. The nurses have refused to transfer to the new hospital in the town. Staff and patients are scheduled to transfer from St Elizabeth's Hospital to the new building at the end of July.

## Museum and library staff continue strike in Glasgow

Museum and library staff in Glasgow, Scotland, in dispute with Glasgow Life (formerly Glasgow Culture and Sport), continued their strike this week. The workers are protesting cuts in pay and conditions, including a 10-percent wage cut for 150 workers, a pay freeze and cuts in public holidays and overtime rates. The cuts are part of a restructuring plan to make savings of £3.4 million in the current financial year.

Workers in several trade unions, including Unison, Unite, GMB and Bectu, are involved. Over the weekend strike action led to the closure of the People's Palace and an exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art. A further strike was held to coincide with an event at the Scotstoun Stadium on Wednesday evening.

## Egypt: Cement, textile workers, nurses strike

*Al Masry Al Youm* reported that workers from the Misr-Beni Sueif Cement Company went on strike July 6 after a colleague was killed while operating heavy machinery. Workers walked off the job protesting that the firm does not adhere to industrial safety measures and lacks emergency medical equipment.

Meanwhile, in Mahalla, 80 workers from the Al-Baraka Textile Company also took strike action in protest at not having received wages since last November.

In Daqahliya, nurses at the Mansoura International Hospital went on strike because they had not received pay bonuses.

## Egypt: Lawyers end solidarity sit-in until further notice

Lawyers have ended their sit-in at the Tanta Courts Complex until further notice from the syndicate board, lawyer Mohamed Suliman told *Daily News Egypt*, July 5.

Dozens of lawyers from all over Egypt organized a sit-in Saturday. This was one day prior to the second appeal hearing of two lawyers charged with attacking the city's local prosecutor. Lawyers are calling for the release of their colleagues on remand.

Last month, Ehab Saey El-Din and Moustafa Fatouh were sentenced to five years in prison for assaulting and offending Basem Abu El-Rous, the local prosecutor in Tanta, the capital of Gharbeya. The verdict was appealed. The two lawyers claimed that they were insulted and attacked by the prosecutor first.

*Daily News Egypt* reported: "Since June, thousands of lawyers

participated in strikes and sit-ins nationwide in response to the imprisonment of Saey El-Din and Fatouh, which further heightened the tension between lawyers on the one hand and judges and prosecutors on the other.... Lawyers, meanwhile, maintained the full strike instated across Egypt. They are currently not allowed to make pleas at any criminal court. Any violation of the strike leads to a six-month suspension from the syndicate, during which time courts do not recognize the suspended lawyer”.

The lawyers are expected to make their pleas during the next appeal session on July 18.

### **Egypt: Education protests over bonuses and public insults**

Staff at the General Authority for Educational Buildings staged a protest July 6 outside the Tanta branch in Gharbiya. The action was to protest the decision of the Minister of Education Ahmed Zaki Badr to cancel their annual bonus and his portrayal of them as a source of corruption.

According to *Al Masry Al Youm*, “About 350 architects, administrators, and technicians dressed in black and carried mock coffins during the demonstration, rejecting Minister Ahmed Zaki Badr’s demand for an apology, saying that Badr was the one to fuel the crisis through accusations he made on several TV programmes”.

Besides the cancellation of their annual bonus for the first time in 20 years, the workers said that Badr is responsible for depriving staff of medical care. The employees threatened industrial action if their bonuses were further delayed, and demanded that the minister reactivate their medical benefits and apologise.

On July 7, Badr decided to grant an extra two months’ wages to staff at the General Authority of Educational Buildings, and to reactivate the medical care provided. A pledge has been made to pay bonuses to staff working in the authority’s 6th of October and Luxor branches.

*Al Masry Al Youm* said that “staff at the two branches have, however, refused to receive the bonuses despite the approval of management. Some employees wondered how their medication would be distributed while the minister has taken a decision to cancel the mandate of the doctors working at the authority’s medical administration. They said the minister’s decision to pay out the bonuses is an implicit admission of their importance to the authority and vowed to resume their strike until all their demands are met”.

Authority staff continued to strike in Gharbiya, Damietta and Daqahlia.

### **Hundreds of South African coal miners strike**

Hundreds of coal miners in the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) began strike action this week. The miners are employed at four mines controlled by the black-owned and managed investment company Shanduka. Shanduka owns four coal mines at Springlake, Leeufontein, Graspan and Townlands. The Springlake site is in Kwazulu-Natal while the other three mines are in the Emalahleni area.

The miners are striking to press their demand for Shanduka to centralise its bargaining so pay and conditions are harmonized at all three pits

Paris Mashego, an NUM regional secretary explained, “Our workers have decided to go on an indefinite strike action after the mediation by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) failed to resolve the dispute”.

### **Kenyan dockers take strike action**

Kenyan dockers working for the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) are currently on a go-slow and have given 21 days notice of a strike if their demands are not met. Their demands are for the KPA to pay a workers’ house allowance, which the KPA had agreed to pay in 2008.

The union has called a meeting of its 5,000 members for this weekend to discuss the action.

### **Kenyan civil servants postpone strike action**

Around 100,000 civil servants in the Union of Kenya Civil Servants (UKCS) agreed at the end of last week to postpone their proposed strike, after the labour minister’s intervention. The civil servants threatened action was in response to the government’s failure to pay 17 percent of the 45 percent pay increase negotiated in 2007. They are also seeking arrears of commuter/transport allowance owed to them.

### **Kenyan Central Organisation of Trade Unions threatens industrial action**

The Kenyan Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU) has threatened to mobilize its members in a five-day nationwide strike if the Kenyan president agrees to a new proposed pay rise for politicians.

The proposed pay and allowances would mean Kenyan MPs being amongst the best paid in the world, with an after tax salary of around \$126,000 (£84,000).

### **Teachers strike in Oyo state, Nigeria**

Oyo teachers in all 33 local government areas of the state began their threatened strike action on Monday. The strike is over the state government’s non-implementation of the previously agreed 27.5 percent enhancement of their salary scale.

### **Civil servants set to strike Borno State, Nigeria**

Civil servants in Borno state, Nigeria were set to begin indefinite strike action yesterday. The action is in response to the non-payment of basic salary and allowances dating back to when the current state administration came into office.

### **Judicial workers strike in Ebonyi state, Nigeria**

Judicial workers in the state of Ebonyi, Nigeria, belonging to the Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria began a one week strike June 30. The

strike is part of an ongoing campaign to demand the government implement the nationally agreed Consolidated Judicial Salary Structure.

The union has said further action will follow if the state government does not heed its demands.



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