

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.

General Strike threatened in Croatia

A general strike is planned for December 10, unless the government organizes a referendum on the guarantee of current working rights of those employed in the public sector.

According to Ozren Matijasevic, president of the Croatian Trade Union Association, over 700,000 people signed a petition over the last few months for a referendum that would guarantee the rights of employees in the public sector. If the government rejects the petition, a series of strikes would be organized across the country--Rijeka on December 3, Pula on December 4, Osijek on December 6 and Split on December 8, national news agency HINA reported.

Croatia, which is in the final stage of negotiations for the planned 2012 entry to the European Union, now has an unemployment rate of more than 16 percent.

Pilots at Luxembourg airport protest company intimidation

On November 24, 70 pilots in the Department of Flight Operations took part in a demonstration outside Luxembourg airport. Around 300 pilots have said they "feel intimidated and repressed" in their current employment at CargoLux.

The two main union leaders involved have immediately signalled their willingness to cut a deal with management.

Captain George Karambilas, president of the Luxembourg Association of Pilots (ALPL), said, "We have evidence of management asking a pilot to modify a report, and more people are coming forward now to say the same thing ... Our management is intimidating pilots, which doesn't let them do their jobs correctly and this is a serious problem."

He added, "We want to sit down with management and prove to them that the incidents have happened so we can come out stronger together on the other side."

Aloyse Kapweiler, general secretary of the pilots' union LCGB, said, "I cannot imagine why (managers) would do this in order to complicate their own lives and the livelihood of their business."

Russian teachers threaten strikes over reforms and pay

Around 25,000 teachers are threatening strike action for January over planned reforms and pitiful pay rises.

An open letter to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was posted on the Zavuch.info web site November 18 and educationalists say they have repeatedly attempted to raise their concerns at the highest level.

"We've sent our demands to the education ministry three times," Yevgeny Baranovsky, editor-in-chief of Zavuch.info, told Gzt.ru. "We only received a reply on the third time, and even then it was as a non-committal reply of a deputy chief of administrative department."

Members of the teaching web-forum, which is not linked to any official trade union, are concerned about the quality of education.

Teachers are unhappy about a pay rise worth barely 200 roubles (\$US6) a month and a shortage of housing. They are also worried about planned lay-offs in schools as a result of falling student numbers caused by the country's demographic crisis.

The teachers also want guaranteed pay from the federal budget no lower than the set minimum wage. They want to end the link between staff salaries and classroom numbers, saying it leads to widespread breaches of basic educational standards and undermines the principle of teaching as a social service.

Most of the 170,000 educators registered at Zavuch want to take action, but Baranovsky has urged a last effort to reach a compromise with the authorities.

"I am holding the people back for now, but if we receive another non-committal reply, then the teachers of all the large Russian cities will take to the streets," he said.

Autoworkers at luxury British carmaker stage second protest over

pay

Hundreds of autoworkers at Bentley staged a second demonstration November 19, in an ongoing dispute over a pay offer.

The employees stood outside the company's headquarters in Crewe, during their 30-minute lunch break to protest against the 4.5 percent pay offer.

Workers say the 4.5 percent pay rise would be cancelled out by the January increase in VAT [Value Added Tax] and higher National Insurance contributions.

Workers are angry that the one-year deal is linked to an increase in hours and a new rule that allows managers to give workers two just hours' notice to work over if production targets are likely to be missed. Some of the 3,500 workers at the plant are pledging to repeat the unofficial lunchtime protest every Monday.

Regional UK journalists strike over jobs and relocation

On November 19, journalists at the Newsquest-owned *Brighton Argus* staged a second day of strikes against plans to relocate their subbing operations to Southampton with the loss of seven jobs.

The strike action on both days went beyond the traditional picket line in Brighton, with staff using social media to spread the word. The group produced a Twitter account, posting videos, pictures and comments throughout the action. There was also a blog with information on why they are striking.

The sub-editors made redundant told *Journalism.co.uk* that they may be asked to work on for another two to four weeks to help with the movement of production to Southampton.

London Tube workers in ballot over victimisation

Hundreds of London Underground workers are to be balloted for industrial action, in a dispute over the treatment of two union members.

The Rail Maritime and Transport (RMT) union has claimed a health and safety representative was sacked because of his role as a union official. It also says that a Tube driver was facing "trumped up" charges as a result of recent strikes over job losses.

Three strikes have taken place in recent months on the Tube over the threat to around 800 jobs. A further 24-hour walkout has been proposed for November 28.

Voting on whether to take industrial action in support of the two men will end on December 7, raising the threat of industrial action in the run-up to Christmas.

UK nuclear weapons system workers to strike

Employees at Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) sites in Aldermaston and Burghfield, Berkshire, the company that provides warheads for Trident, the UK's nuclear weapons system, are to take their first ever industrial action over pay on December 1.

More than 1,000 workers are expected to strike after being offered a pay rise of less than 2 percent. Workers are angry over the increased payments to the AWE board and the level of dividends being paid to its controlling companies.

South African miners declare wage dispute with TEBA

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has been attempting to negotiate a 15 percent wage increase together with a minimum wage of R1500 with TEBA. TEBA is a recruitment firm specializing in supplying mineworkers. Following several negotiation meetings the company's final offer was for a 4.4 percent increase.

The dispute has now been referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). Facing NUM officials across the negotiating table was TEBA Managing Director, James Motlasi, at one time a president of the NUM.

Nigerian civil servants strike

Civil servants working for Ogun state government began a three day strike on 24 November. The workers allege the state government has failed to hand over N3.8 billion (\$US25 million) to their pension fund administrators. They are also demanding payment of leave bonuses, which have not been paid since January 2009.

The Ogun state Trade Union Congress chairman gave his support to the strike and urged the civil servants to back the action.

Nigeria: Plateau State parliament workers strike

Workers employed by the Plateau State Assembly (parliament) began

indefinite strike action last week. The workers locked the Assembly premises preventing the Assembly members from meeting.

They are protesting non payment of allowances. The workers held a demonstration two weeks ago to protest the long outstanding non-payment of the allowances, but to no avail.

Nigerian doctors threatened with sack

The Edo state government gave doctors an ultimatum to end their two week strike and return to work on Monday 22 November or face being dismissed. The chairman of the Edo state Nigerian Medical Association vowed the doctors would not succumb to intimidation and that the strike would continue.

The doctors are taking action to protest the kidnapping of medical staff, which has become a regular occurrence in Edo state. The most recent kidnapping was of Professor Eugene Okpere who had been the former chief medical director at Benin University teaching hospital.

Nigerian journalists take strike action

Members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists and of the Radio, Television and Theatre Arts Workers Union, working in public radio, television and the ministry of culture began what was to be three days strike action Monday 22 November.

The strike was called in support of their demand for a new salary structure covering media workers at state and federal level.

However, it was called off after one day, after meetings between the two unions and the labour minister and information minister led to a new agreement.



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