

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.

Greek public transport workers strike against government

Public transportation workers struck for 24 hours in Greece on Wednesday. The strike was called by the Greek Civil Servants Confederation (ADEDY) to protest the plans of the social democratic PASOK government of Prime Minister George Papandreou to cut public transport workers' jobs and wages and plans to sell off parts of the state network.

The cuts are part of the government austerity programme seeking to reduce a 2009 budget deficit of 15.4 percent.

The strike led to a shutdown of public transport in Athens. The metro service, which is used by 620,000 people daily and is the main link from the city centre to Athens International Airport, was closed, as was the Kifissia-Piraeus electric railway. Trams, buses, trolley buses and suburban railway services were also shut down. The Hellenic Railways Organization network, which the government plans to break up with the possible loss of 40 percent of the workforce, ground to a halt.

The strike took place as Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, was visiting Athens. The IMF praised PASOK's austerity measures and said that further retrenchment was still necessary.

Striking Finnish cabin crew reject deal on working hours

On December 6, striking cabin crew, employed at national carrier Finnair, rejected a settlement proposal put forward by

the National Labour Conciliator on work schedules. It was the seventh day of the cabin crew strike.

Cabin crew began the strike November 30, stating that management were undermining the system of compensatory days off after long-haul flights. The airline had to cancel over 200 international and domestic flights December 1. Hundreds of flights have been cancelled since. The dispute is expected to escalate, as other transport workers come out in support.

Pilots strike at two German airlines

Pilots employed by German airlines Tuifly and Germania airlines struck on Wednesday. Some flights from Frankfurt airport and others were grounded and others delayed. The strike by the Tuifly pilots, over the failure to reach a wage settlement, began at 5 a.m. local time and lasted three hours.

The 150 Germania pilots staged a 13-hour strike to oppose their employers' attempt to prevent them establishing an employee council.

Journalists strike two local newspapers in England

Journalists at the *Southern Daily Echo* in Southampton, England and *Brighton Argus*, also on the south coast, struck on Tuesday and Wednesday this week. *Echo* staff are opposing a pay freeze, the closure of the final salary pension scheme and the scrapping of loyalty payments. NUJ members at the *Brighton Argus* are protesting Newsquest's plans to move the sub-editing operation to Southampton. The union claims that the move will result in the loss of seven jobs.

Workers at Heinz plant in England to strike over pay

Around 1,200 workers at a Heinz Baked Beans factory in Wigan have voted by 9-1 to take industrial action, after being offered a below-inflation pay offer of 3.3 percent.

The plant in Greater Manchester produces beans, soups, pasta meals and baby food.

Almost 90 percent of the workforce who took part in the ballot voted in favour of strike action and 95 percent for action short of a strike after management failed to improve its pay offer, which had previously been rejected by 80 percent of the workforce.

Textile workers in Mahalla, Egypt end week-long strike

On December 5, 200 textile workers employed at the Abu El-Sebaa factory in the city of Mahalla ended a week-long strike. The workers struck to demand unpaid wages. According to an employee quoted on AhramOnline, the action ended after they received half of the pending payments and were promised the second half the following week.

Iranian factory workers strike over unpaid wages

Around 1,700 workers at the Jahan Fars company in Deylam county, in the southern Bushehr province, began strike action November 24 after eight months without pay, according to the Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network.

The workers, mostly from Deylam town and the surrounding villages, closed off four crossroads to the company's general traffic. During the past few months several thousand workers have struck in Iran to demand unpaid wages.

Mobil oil managers strike in Nigeria

Management staff working for Exxon Mobil in Nigeria, members of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), began strike action last week protesting the sacking of around 80 of their colleagues.

An Exxon company spokesman confirmed the action was taking place and that administrative operations in Eket, Lagos and Port Harcourt had been halted as a result of the action, but that oil production had not been affected. Some of the senior staff had unsuccessfully attempted to blockade an oil export terminal at Qua Iboe.

Jude Nwaogu, spokesman for the union, explained that 66 Nigerian senior employees working offshore and 18 in offices had been sacked and replaced by expatriates. As well as protesting the sackings, the union is protesting other alleged anti-labour practices.

Swaziland Bandag tyre strike

Workers at three branches of the Bandag, tyre re-treading and repair shops took strike action last week in support of a 10 percent pay increase.

Among their other demands is an end to pay differentials under which workers are presently paid different rates for the same work. Workers say some fitters are paid only half the rate of others.

The original pay claim was for 15 percent and management's first offer was 8 percent. The company since increased their offer to 9 percent.

Workers at the Mbabane branch initially rallied in the company premises, but after being ejected they picketed the entrance and did a toyi toyi, a form of protest dance.



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