

Strikes and protests by Egyptian workers

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Strikes and protests continued across Egypt this week, with many workers demanding improved wages and working conditions while others sought to block moves that would reduce their income or restrict their rights.

Around 350 butane gas cylinder distributors in the Delta governorate of Daqahlia staged demonstrations before the Ministry of Social Solidarity in the city of Talkha, in protest against the ministry reducing the number of cylinders they receive.

In Cairo, 200 Tax Authority employees also staged protests, demanding wages and bonuses commensurate with their qualifications.

Another 45 workers staged demonstrations in front of the office of the Justice Minister, demanding the implementation of previous court rulings that had ordered their appointments to the ministry.

In Alexandria, 30 temporary teachers protested before the Ministry of Education, demanding permanent contracts.

In Gharbiya, 1,200 workers from the Financial and Industrial Company demonstrated for better wages and benefits, while 350 workers of the Chipsy Company in Monufiya staged protests for the same reasons.

In Beheira, 100 students of the Nursing Institute staged protests against not being allowed to join the nursing syndicate, impacting on their ability to find jobs.

In Ismailia, residents of the Mahsama village protested against the local council's decision to close a bakery in the village that served 1,500 residents.

Workers at Arab Company for Radio Transistor and Electronic Appliances (Telemasr) protested April 7 after the owners shut down the factory and imposed a one-month paid vacation.

According to the *Daily News Egypt*, "The workers saw the shutdown as an attempt to frustrate the demands they've been making since the privatization

of the company in 1999."

The former public sector electronics factory is known for its NEC TVs, cookers and most recently laptops. It has two branches, one in Haram and another in Ismailia.

A one-month paid vacation also meant that the workers' monthly average salary of 600 Egyptian pounds would drop to half or even less, since it was mainly made up of allowances related to work.

A month without production would give the owner an excuse to fire more workers. There were 3,000 employees in the 1990s and this has dwindled to 200.

Workers of the Spinning and Weaving Factory in Assiut refused to deliver the factory to its new buyer, a conglomerate of private banks that had obtained permission from former Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif to buy it.

Employees at 14 power stations began a series of strikes April 11 to push for the removal of ministry officials involved in corruption and for a stand to be made against the squandering of public funds, which they say is rampant..

Energy Ministry spokesman Aktham Abul Ela denied any strikes were taking place, pointing out that he had communicated with a number of company officials and that they had assured him "things were good."

Workers at Shebin El-Kom Textile Company in Menoufiya, north of Cairo, resumed their strike after suspending it for two days last week following an agreement between the workers and company management. They accuse the company of trying to manipulate dismissed workers, forcing them to sign resignation letters by saying that this will grant their colleagues a return to work.

Management called the armed forces into the plant April 6, as workers sought to resume their sit-in.

Shebin El-Kom Textiles Company workers held a 35-day sit-in to protest against the Indonesian

management's attempts at eliminating the workforce and dismantling factories in order to reuse the 152 acres of land on which the factory stands. Now they say that they will not end their sit-in until all their demands are met.



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