

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

13 May 2011

The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Italians strike to oppose worsening economic conditions

Thousands of public sector and transport workers participated in strikes and demonstrations May 6 against the current economic conditions.

Dozens of flights were cancelled in the country's main airports and some train services were suspended.

Preliminary government figures showed around 13 percent of public sector workers were involved in strikes.

Tens of thousands attended rallies in all the major cities. One rally passed through the centre of Rome to the Coliseum.

The government has revised downward its economic growth forecast and is now predicting 1.1 percent growth this year. Italy's unemployment rate rose to 8.3 percent in March from 8.2 percent in February—the first increase in months. The unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 24 rose to 28.6 percent in March.

Süddeutsche Zeitung journalists strike

Up to 150 journalists at the Munich-based *Süddeutsche Zeitung* went on strike May 4 in response to plans by the paper's publisher to cut their salaries and increase their working hours.

Instead of receiving 12 pay packets per annum,

journalists currently receive 13.75 pay packets—a common arrangement known as Weihnachtsgeld, or Christmas money. The publisher wants to reduce this to 13.

In addition, journalists are protesting a proposed increase in the standard working week from 36.5 to 40 hours with no financial compensation. New recruits are also to receive less pay than current staff reporters. Staff accuse *Süddeutsche Zeitung GmbH* of aiming to slash future pension entitlements by half.

Newsquest journalists in South London balloted on redundancies

A ballot for industrial action by 25 journalists employed by Newsquest at Sutton and Twickenham will begin May 16, with a result due at the end of the month.

Earlier this month, the journalists unanimously voted no confidence in their managing director Roger Mills and director of advertising Dene Stuart after a company decision to make an unspecified number of editorial staff redundant while the group's titles continue to make substantial profits.

Solidarity strike halts construction at Dublin hospital

Industrial action by 450 construction workers in support of two colleagues involved in a dispute with contractor Architectural Aluminium Limited took place May 5.

Construction work at the Mater hospital in Dublin

was suspended as a result of the dispute. Building work on a new sports facility could also be affected.

Nigerian civil servants hold one-day strike

Civil servants working for the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development held a one-day strike on Monday. The action by the workers, members of several different unions, was under the auspices of the Joint Negotiation Council (NJC).

The strike was the first for 30 years and was over non-payment of different allowances over the last three years. Amongst their grievances was the failure of the ministry to release promotion letters, to give training and hazard allowances, and non-payment of burial entitlements to deceased staff.

Prior to the strike the Human Resources department issued directives not to take part in the strike, threatening punishment for those that did.

The unions had had several meetings with the ministry's permanent secretary, Fatima Bamidele, prior to the strike to try and resolve the issue. In her previous position as permanent secretary at the Ministry of Science and Technology, Bamidele refused to pay staff allowances and was eventually forced out after staff protests.

Zambian public sector workers strike

Public sector workers in the Southern Zambian district of Itezhi Tezhi began strike action Tuesday. They struck following the failure of the Public Service Management Development Division (PSMD) to honour assurances made to pay rural hardship allowance.

The workers, represented by seven unions, had been trying to resolve the issue for the past five years and say they will only return to work when they have received written confirmation from the PSMD. Last May teachers in the district carried out a go-slow over the rural hardship allowance.

Zimbabwe: Harare municipal workers strike

Workers employed by Harare city council, members of the Harare Municipal Workers' Union, have been on strike since last week. They are protesting the regular late payment of their salaries. This has been happening since the end of last year, with the workers not receiving their salaries until the middle of the following month.

The council employs around 10,000 workers. The action has led to the non-collection of rubbish and non-repair of water and sewer pipes leakages.



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