

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

15 July 2011

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

BBC World Service journalists strike over jobs

Journalists at the BBC World Service are to strike July 15 over 100 compulsory redundancies.

Of the BBC staff members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) who participated in the ballot, 72 percent voted to take industrial action.

The strike also opposes the dismissal of a BBC World Service employee.

The NUJ is not opposing redundancies, but merely seeking a negotiated settlement with the BBC to manage redundancies.

UK bus workers take industrial action

Bus workers employed on the First Devon and Cornwall routes have voted by more than three to one to strike over the abolition of a vital staff transport service.

The company intends to withdraw its “Staff Trooper” bus, operating in the early mornings to get staff to work that predates the privatisation of the transport sector.

Finnish air traffic controllers may strike over pay and conditions

Air traffic controllers could begin industrial action July 19 over a dispute concerning pay and work conditions.

In the event of a strike, workers at all sites operated by the Finnish Civil Aviation Administration, Finavia, would be affected.

Baghdad protests for jobs, clean water, electricity

On July 8, hundreds protested in central Baghdad’s Tahrir Square calling on the authorities to provide jobs and basic services including clean water and electricity.

According to a report on the website of the General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW), “[P]rotestors carried handmade posters calling for an end to corruption and demanding an immediate political reform”.

Many also held photographs of loved ones killed in the violence related to the US-led occupation of the country.

Growing strike wave in South Africa

Around 40,000 chemical workers came out on strike this week, joining the 170,000 metal workers who began their strike last week.

They are seeking a double-digit pay increase, a minimum wage of R6000 (\$880), a ban on the use of labour brokers, and better allowances.

Speaking to a rally of chemical and metal workers in Durban on Tuesday, COSATU General Secretary

Zwelinzima Vavi said, “In 1969 a white worker was earning an average of R2,400 (\$350) a month, and the black worker was earning about R450 (\$65) a month. Today a white worker is earning an average of R19,000 (\$2,800) while a black worker is earning R2,400 (\$350) a month”.

The chemical workers union deputy general secretary, Thabang Mdlalose, explaining the need for double digit rises and a minimum of R6,000 (\$880), said, “More and more workers cannot afford the basic necessities of life because of rising prices...electricity, food, transport, education and water are necessities that are now unaffordable to workers”.

The strike may be joined by National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Talks with gold mine employers have reached deadlock, and coal employers have made an around four percent pay offer.

Nigerian workers fight for implementation of minimum wage

As part of his election campaign, President Goodluck Jonathan proposed a national minimum wage for Nigerian workers of N18,000 (\$120). This has now become law, but the federal government, state governments and private employers are, as could be expected, back-peddling.

Workers belonging to the Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) working at ports throughout the country were set to go on strike yesterday, demanding implementation of the minimum wage.

Workers in the Niger Delta state of Bayelsa were also set to strike, with the objective of closing down state government operations. State Governor Timipre Sylva, in a speech at a Labour Day celebration earlier in the year, had promised to implement the minimum wage but had since reneged on his promise.

The National Executive Council (NEC) of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) meeting in Abuja has announced a three-day general strike to begin Wednesday next week in support of demands for the minimum wage to be implemented.

Speaking to the press, the NLC president explained “that over three months since the new national wage

became law, no government, whether federal, state, or local government has implemented it. Also, no private sector employer has paid the new wages”.

Nigerian steel workers strike

At the end of last week, striking Indian workers at the Delta Steel Company in Alajda state stormed the factory’s melting shop to stop production. Their strike began the previous week to protest the non-payment of wages for up to a year.

Nigerian workers at the plant had also been on strike in June of this year over the issue of non-payment of wages, but had returned to work after promises by management to commence payments.



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