

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

18 May 2012

Bus drivers could strike during London 2012 Olympics

Bus drivers in London may go on a pay strike during the forthcoming Olympic Games. A ballot is to be held of 20,000 workers for industrial action.

The Unite union is calling for a £500 bonus payment, but Transport for London (TfL) said bus workers were employed by private firms who set their pay.

Since privatisation, bus workers in London are employed by 21 separate companies. Unite said it expected 800,000 extra passengers to travel on buses during the Games.

UK rail workers strike over shift system, rosters, pensions

On May 9, train signal workers in Stirling struck for 24 hours over a demand for Network Rail to introduce a 12-hour shift system. Two further 48-hour strikes have been proposed on May 31 and June 7.

A referendum conducted by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) found workers favoured the 12-hour system by a margin of 15 to 1. A strike ballot last month returned a 100 percent vote for action.

According to the RMT, workers at Freightliner in Southampton are set to ballot for strikes in a dispute over rosters.

A ballot for industrial action and action short of a strike has opened in a dispute over pensions on East Midlands Trains (EMT). The ballot is to close May 30.

Some 500 members of the ASLEF train drivers' union are already taking selective strike action over reductions in the Joint Contribution Rate (JCR) in the East Midlands Trains section of the Railways Pension Scheme.

ASLEF members struck on May 17 in their latest one-day action.

Cypriot refuse collection strike over owed wages

An ongoing strike by municipal workers is leaving most of north Nicosia, Cyprus's capital, strewn with uncollected rubbish.

Workers say they haven't been paid for two months and, according to the *Cypress Mail*, demands for the resignation of the mayor, Cemal Bulutoglugulari, have been increasing.

Municipal workers are into a sixth week of refusing to carry out rubbish collections.

Workers have threatened to step up their action by cutting water supplies to the northern part of the capital if Bulutoglugulari does not respond to their demand for prompt payment of their owed wages and adherence to an earlier agreed pay protocol.

European pilots and cabin crew stage safety protest

Over 300 pilots and cabin crew from across Europe took to the streets of Cologne, Monday, in protest over the latest proposals regarding aircrew flight times by the European Union (EU).

The workers gathered in front of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to air concerns regarding EU flight time limitation proposals, which they believe are insufficient and fail to adequately protect both passenger and crew.

One of several unsafe practices contained in the EASA's current proposal for aircrew on standby is that a pilot would be required to land an aircraft 20 hours after having woken up.

Contract workers shut down electricity in Beirut

Contract workers at Electricite Du Liban (EDL) continued their two-week protest in the capital Tuesday, demanding permanent employment with benefits at the state-run company.

Contract and part-time workers protested at the company's Mar Mikhael headquarters visitors' hall. Some managed to shut down electricity at the building. They have demanded that the government approve a draft law which would grant them permanent status at EDL, from fears of losing their jobs to service providers contracted by the Energy and Water Ministry.

The Committee of EDL Contract Workers and Collectors says some have been on temporary contracts for up to 20 years, without receiving the benefits to which they have been entitled.

South African postal workers strike

Around 1,000 post officers workers in the province of Gauteng are on strike protesting their employment status. Although working for the South Africa Post Office, they are employed through labour brokers and have little security. They are demanding the post office ends its contract with the brokers and employs them as permanent staff.

The Communication Workers Union, which represents post office staff, is planning a march in support.

Zambian rail strike

Rail workers in Zambia, employed by the Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA), went on strike Monday. Union members picketed the TAZARA regional offices in Mpika. They are seeking payment of salary arrears for March and April and calling for top management to stand down, accusing them of incompetence.

Indian workers stranded after strike in Angola

Around 1000 workers, mainly young men from India, have been stranded after striking against Dubai-based Engineering Contractor ETA Star International. They had been engaged to work at a cement factory in Sumbe, in west central Angola.

They took the action to press their demands for wage arrears to be paid and paid in US dollars rather than the local currency.

In response the company called the police who attacked strikers with tear gas and bullets. Several workers were injured and some arrested. They are now stranded and unable to return home to India as they say the company is still holding their travel documents.

Strike threat at Tunisian airline over union recognition

Around 1,000 workers employed at the Tunisair, the Tunisian state airline, have called a two-day strike for next week. It is in support of their demand to be represented by the GCTT trade union. Tunisair currently will only deal with the UGTT union and refuses to negotiate with the GCTT.

The UGTT general secretary denounced the workers, saying, "We do not agree with their demands ... this is a critical time. The current situation at Tunisair does not allow us to go on strike."

Moroccan dockers strike in support of stranded seamen

Moroccan dockers struck last Saturday in support of Moroccan seamen who have been stranded in French, Spanish and Moroccan ports since December. The seamen worked for the Moroccan ferry company Comarit-Comanav, whose ships were impounded because of outstanding unpaid bills. The seamen have been left without wages and in dire straits. The government has done nothing on their behalf.

Namibian airport workers action thwarted by court ruling

Workers employed by the Namibia Airports Company were set to strike Tuesday, but following a Labour Court ruling sought by the employer it has been rescheduled for May 21.

The workers are represented by the Namibia Transport and Allied Workers' Union.

The action follows NAC's retrenchment of its workforce in March. Some were not rehired, while some are now on worse conditions of employment, including being transferred to new workplaces with no accommodation for themselves or their families.

Malawian uranium miners strike

Workers at the Australian-owned Paladin Energy Kayerekera uranium mine in Malawi stopped work on Saturday demanding a 66 percent pay increase. This followed the recent 50 percent devaluation of the Malawi currency, the Kwacha, and the pegging of local salaries to the US dollar.

According to the online *Mining Weekly*, the miners were due to return to work Wednesday evening. Following talks between the company, the Local Staff Association and the government, the miners agreed to return to work. The company promised no one would lose their job as a result of the action and they would review local salaries in six months' time.

The company recently reported production figures for the last nine months were up by 14 percent.



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