

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

1 June 2012

## Spanish coal miners strike against subsidy cuts

On May 30, striking coal miners blocked the N66 national highway in Campomanes near Oviedo in northern Spain. Spanish Civil Guards were mobilised to disperse demonstrating miners in Campomanes.

Around 8,000 miners took part in the third of four strike days this month to protest against government subsidy reductions from €300 million to €110 million.

Eight miners are staging a protest underground in a well in Santa Cruz del Sil, Castilla y Leon.

## UK doctors in first strike in nearly 40 years over pensions

UK doctors are to take industrial action on June 21 against the government's planned changes to their pensions.

The last time that doctors voted for industrial action was in 1975. They will provide urgent and emergency care, but will postpone non-urgent cases.

The British Medical Association (BMA) said separate ballots of six branches of its 130,000-strong membership, including GPs and hospital consultants, had produced an overall majority in favour of action on a 50 percent turnout.

It said 73% of consultant doctors--the biggest group that took part in the ballot--and 63% of local doctors said they were prepared to strike.

Among 17,561 GPs who voted, 63 percent supported the convening of a strike. Of the 18,721 consultants who voted, 73 percent backed the convening of a strike. Among the 3,476 staff, associate specialists and specialty doctors who took part, 77 percent approved of a strike. The 12,060 junior doctors gave the fullest backing to industrial action, with 82 percent recording they were prepared to strike.

According to the BMA, by 2014, some doctors will have 14.5 percent deducted from their pay towards their pensions, compared with 7.35 percent for senior civil servants on similar salaries, to receive similar pensions.

## Irish water-service and peat-production workers to strike

Over 2,500 water-service workers are expected to strike, while another 2,000 peat-production employees are preparing to down tools next Tuesday over government plans to set up a new company to

oversee metering and maintenance.

Water-service workers in the country's 34 local authorities are to be balloted for industrial action over the government plans next month.

Workers at Bord na Mona are set to strike in a dispute over a 3.5 percent pay offer. The workers rejected the deal, agreed last month, when they discovered that it would have meant they would get a lump-sum payment of €1,000 up front and a mere 1.75 percent pay rise. The final 1.75 percent increase, to be paid towards the end of the year, would also be dependent on the company's performance.

## Public sector pay strikes spread across Norway

Thousands of teachers, carers and policemen struck last week in Norway over wages and hundreds of kindergartens and school closures. The dispute affected several townships across the country, including Asker, Askøy, Bergen, Bodø, Drammen, Kristiansand, Larvik, Lillehammer, Narvik, Oslo, Sandnes, Tromsø, Trondheim and Ålesund.

It was the first walkout by state employees in the country since 1984.

Up to 30,000 public sector workers went on strike, according to trade union umbrella group UNIO figures, demanding higher annual raises to their salaries than the 4 percent offered.

The BBC reported, "Unlike other European economies, Norway's has continued to grow, buoyed by its oil wealth. Growth for the first three months of 2012 reached 1.4 percent with a government projection of 3.75 percent for the whole year."

Despite this, the government has called for wage restraint.

Norway's petroleum sector workers have also threatened to strike after talks between labor unions and employers failed.

## Turkish public sector workers in pay strike

On May 23, thousands of public sector workers demonstrated in Ankara after a failure of pay talks.

The government's 3.5 percent offer for the first half of the year and 4 percent rise for the second half was rejected.

Protest meetings were also scheduled in Istanbul and İzmir, Erzurum, Konya, Mersin, Diyarbakir and Aydin involving hundreds of thousands.

## **Turkish airline employees take action over strike ban**

On Wednesday, Turkish Airlines (Turk Hava Yollari) cancelled 200 domestic and international flights due to a strike at Istanbul Atatürk Airport to protest a draft law banning strikes at the airline.

## **Egyptian workshop and postal workers strike**

Around a thousand workers in maintenance workshops in Metro Shubra went on strike this week to demand paid holidays and limiting the working week to 35 hours.

The Centre for Trade Union and Workers Services reported nationwide strikes at more than 500 post offices for the third time in two weeks. Strikers are demanding the abolishing of the decision requiring workers to be on duty on Saturday without extra payment.

## **Omani oil workers strike**

“Over a thousand employees of companies under contract with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Oxy Oman have been on strike for the last four days,” reported the *Gulf News*, May 27.

The companies affected by the strike include Attila Doğan, Al Turkey, STS, and Wood Group. The workers’ demands include 400 Omani riyals (Dh3,804) basic salary, risk allowance and the provision of a pension.

Employees of nine contractors were on strike in Foud oilfields. Four companies in Nimr and in other places were also affected.

## **Union calls on government to intervene in South African postal strike**

The strike by around 1,000 postal workers in Gauteng Province, working for the state-owned South Africa Post Office but employed through labour brokers, continues. It is now in its fourth month.

Their strike is nominally supported by the Communication Workers Union (CWU), but they are not members. Their contracts with the labour brokers prohibit union membership.

CWU spokesperson Matakana Mothapo has called on the government to intervene. Mail is beginning to pile up and workers have been confronted by police. Mothapo announced a march in Pretoria for June 14.

## **Nigerian academic staff call for sympathy strike**

Doctors in Lagos state hospitals have been on strike since April 24 demanding the state government impose the Consolidated Medical

Salary Structure as agreed by the government in 2010.

Now the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has called on the Lagos Government to honour the previous agreement. The ASSU national president stated that unless Lagos state brought in the agreed salary structure, he would call for a nationwide strike of ASUU members at the next executive meeting on June 1.

## **Nigeria: Ondo polytechnic workers strike threat**

Staff at the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic in Owo, Ondo state has given notice to strike. They are demanding salary and allowances in arrears following an agreement signed with management at the end of 2010, which is yet to be implemented. The state government has failed to finance the agreement. They are also protesting the new tax regime imposed by the government.

## **Swaziland’s public transport drivers resume strike**

Public transport workers in the Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers Union (STAWU) resumed their strike Tuesday in the city of Manzini, despite a court order prohibiting action. They are protesting the municipal authorities’ attempts to make them use the Satellite bus rank, which they say is losing them money.

Drivers and conductors confronted police at the rank, but were eventually dispersed by riot police.

## **Swaziland teachers ballot for strike**

Teachers in the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) began balloting Thursday for strike action on June 14. A mass meeting had been scheduled to discuss the proposed action. SNAT is calling for a 4.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment.



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