

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

24 May 2013

Finnish bus drivers strike

Around 400 drivers of the Veolia bus company have taken part in a walkout since May 14, in protest at a new shift system and the company's personnel management record.

Over the past week, Veolia Transport and the union have held talks without results. The strike affects all Veolia routes from the Tuupakka and Hakunila depots. Traffic in central Vantaa has been severely affected, as well as disruption to cross traffic in the Helsinki suburb.

Bus services between the Helsinki-Vantaa airport and neighbouring Tikkurila were also disrupted and the walkout has cut off some internal bus services in Kerava.

Possible strike at UK call centres

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has threatened industrial action after Telefonica O2 announced it will outsource thousands of call centre jobs and make hundreds redundant from four UK sites.

Workers from Bury, Glasgow, Leeds and Preston Brook are to be outsourced to Capita PLC. Around 600 workers are expected to be made redundant and over 3,000 will transfer to Capita with no guarantees on their terms, conditions or job security. In total, 3,670 jobs are affected.

The transfer is expected to take place from July 1. Last year, O2 jobs were relocated to South Africa where Capita has operations.

UK carers vote to strike over pay and conditions

Over 100 low-paid carers supporting adults with disabilities for Future Directions in Rochdale have voted overwhelmingly in favour of taking action over cuts to their pay and conditions.

A strike is set to take place on the bank holiday weekend (May 25-27).

In October 2012, Future Directions took the contract on from Rochdale Council with the proviso of making large cuts.

UK Post Office workers vote for action

Post Office workers voted overwhelmingly for strike action against plans to transfer 70 "crown" branches to retailers. The Union of Communication Workers (UCW) says some 800 jobs are at risk by the move, and that those in branches transferred could face cuts in pay, pensions and conditions.

UCW members voted nine-to-one to walk out next Tuesday. It will be their fifth strike since Easter.

Teachers in Wembley, London strike against academy status

Teachers at the Copland Community School in Wembley struck on Wednesday over plans to turn it into an academy.

Academy schools are the primary means through which successive governments have sought to privatise education. While those with academy status receive central government funds, they can receive sponsorships from business and other organisations. They are also free to set pay and conditions for their employees.

The decision to turn the school into an academy came after a report by the schools inspectorate Ofsted branded it "inadequate." Critical Ofsted reports are the primary tool through which schools are forced to take the academy route.

Iranian tile factory workers protest unpaid wages

Workers at the Gilana tile factory protesting unpaid wages blocked the main Rasht-to-Qazvin road Saturday.

One of the striking workers told local media, "We are gathering in front of the factory to protest nine months of unpaid wages.

"Our representative, the governor and city officials promised that two months after the New Year all unpaid wages would be paid, but until now they have not kept their promise

"Our employer is not buying any raw materials for production, and is instead using up current supplies."

Another worker added, "The authorities have repeatedly promised to resolve the problem. The workers of the Gilana tile

factory are now not even able to afford bread. There are 250 workers and retired workers facing this problem.”

Israeli health workers hold one-day strike

On Monday, staff at Kupat Holim Meuhedet, Israel’s third-largest health fund, halted traffic on Tel Aviv’s Ibn Gvirol Street.

Hundreds of Meuhedet employees held demonstrations at the health fund’s central offices in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. In Jerusalem, they forced their way into the manager’s office in the health fund’s main building on Haturim Street.

The actions were taken during a one-day warning strike over management delaying a new collective agreement negotiated now for 18 months. The strike closed all the health fund’s community clinics except for lifesaving departments and the independent physicians’ clinics.

A month ago, the Histadrut labor federation declared a work dispute on behalf of Meuhedet workers over the issue.

UAE migrant workers end strike

Thousands of Asian migrant labourers ended a four-day strike on Wednesday. They were demanding a wage rise.

The action is extremely rare as strikes and unions are banned in the United Arab Emirates. Asian migrant labourers—who make up most of the workforce—are super-exploited, with many receiving no more than \$250 a month.

The workers were employed by the Arabtec construction company on a new track for Dubai Metro. In a statement, the company threatened that “this unwarranted stoppage had been instigated by a minority group who will be held accountable for their actions.”

South African chrome miners strike

Miners at the Lanxess chrome mine in Rustenburg went on strike last Thursday, demanding bonus payments that they say the company’s London head office promised in 2011.

The company obtained a court order declaring the strike illegal, but several hundred of the miners ignored the order and continue to strike. On Tuesday, 10 of the striking miners were hospitalised after clashing with security staff at the mine.

South African car workers hold wildcat strike

Around 1,500 car workers at the Mercedes-Benz plant in East London in the Eastern Cape took unofficial strike action Friday. This is the first strike action at the company in 24 years. They were protesting against plans to outsource the factory logistics department. They are members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA).

The union had an agreement with the company signed in 1989 enabling it to hold 72-hour unprotected strikes, but the company went to court and was granted a court order for the workers to return to work. NUMSA said it would abide by the court order and is in discussion with the company.

Sudan hospital staff strike

Staff and doctors at the Nertiti hospital in Central Darfur went on strike at the weekend. Strikers demanded increased security at the hospital after armed men attacked and robbed members of staff.

Nigerian students protest in support of striking academic staff

Students protested in the Nigerian capital of Abuja Tuesday in support of striking academic staff. Members of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics are striking to demand the federal government implement the previously agreed consolidated tertiary institution salary structure (CONTISS 15).

Nigerian airline workers’ strike

Workers employed by the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) went on strike Monday demanding a wage increase. Police surrounded the NAMA headquarters to prevent strikers getting access.

The workers are represented by three unions, the Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN), the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE) and the National Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers (NAAPE). The unions accused NAMA management of using inexperienced managers as air traffic control staff, putting passengers on the flights that did go ahead in danger.



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