

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

5 July 2013

UK Post Office workers stage seventh strike

Workers in hundreds of high street Post Offices went on 24-hour strike Saturday over plans to close 70 state-owned Crown branches and a dispute over jobs and pay.

The Post Office proposals threaten up to 800 jobs.

Staff are calling for a pay rise of 3.5 percent for 2012-2013 and a further rise this financial year, but the Post Office says that is not possible when it is making losses. Instead, it is offering a series of cash payments totalling up to £3,400 before April 2015.

The 373 Crown offices, which are usually the larger ones, represent around 3 percent of the total post office network but deal with a fifth of all customers and handle an estimated 40 percent of financial transactions.

The latest strike is the seventh in the current dispute.

UK council workers to vote on strike over pay

A total of 75,000 local government workers across 32 councils are being balloted for a strike in an attempt to increase the 1 percent pay rise they have been offered.

This includes council workers in Scotland. If the strike is voted through, it will mean a minimum of three (separate) days of action over a seven week period later this year.

The UNISON union opened a ballot Wednesday, which closes August 13.

The 1 percent pay offer follows two years of pay freezes and a meagre 0.65 percent increase in 2010.

Strike ballot at south London college

Staff at LeSoCo in south London are being balloted for industrial action in a dispute over job cuts.

LeSoCo is a merger of Lewisham College and Southwark College, with campuses in Lewisham, Deptford, Waterloo, Bermondsey and Camberwell, a south London college.

The result of the ballot will be known today.

College staff are opposing proposals to cut around 35 posts and abolish science and floristry courses, even though both courses have had more applications than this time last year.

Greek tax office workers strike

Tax office staff went on strike June 27-28 over cutbacks to the tax service. Government proposals include the privatization of auditing and the closure of tax offices, resulting in job cuts.

The strike was called by the Panhellenic Federation of Tax Employees (POE DOY) and was supported by the Federation of Unions of the Finance Ministry (OSYO).

Representatives of the two unions walked out of a meeting with government officials this week, complaining that Finance Minister Yannis Stournara had not attended and that officials representing him had not been given the authority to make commitments on the issues raised.

Serbian construction workers strike

“All 26 road construction companies in Serbia went on a general strike Wednesday on company grounds, which will continue until they receive an official response to their demands from the government, said union leader Sonja Vukanovic,” according to *inserbia.info*.

“We have chosen a more peaceful form of strike until we see the government’s conclusions, and based on them the strike leaders will decide on our next steps,” Vukanovic told *Tanjug*.

A co-ordination team, made up of representatives of the finance and transportation ministries, public company Putevi Srbije, the Employers’ Association and the road workers’ union has been formed to resolve the dispute. Last week, the government adopted a bill on taking over Putevi Srbije’s liabilities to road construction companies and turning them into public debt in the amount of RSD 1.3 billion (€11.3 million).

Sit-in at Iranian International Airport

Around 300 workers at Imam Khomeini International Airport staged a sit-in June 30 in protest at unpaid wages and benefits for a period over six months.

Fars News Agency reported that the protesting workers are involved in the southern runway project, the pilgrimage terminal and freight development of the international airport. One of the protesters said, “The policy of the outgoing administration is to provide government funds for projects that will end this year before the end to this administration.”

Projects that will stretch beyond the year have not received the promised government loans and left contractors without the needed funds.

Lebanese air traffic controllers strike

Air traffic controls at Rafic Hariri International airport staged a two-hour strike Thursday demanding to be included in public sector pay increases.

Workers say they intend to take further action if parliament fails to include them in public sector pay increases, according to a report in *The Daily Star*.

Libyan oil workers strike

Oil workers at the Zueitina Oil Company went on strike Monday. The strike began at the 103 D Field, spreading to 103 A and the Zala oilfields and then the port. They are demanding management personnel changes.

Last week, in a separate dispute, production workers at Mellitah Oil's Elephant (El-Fil) field came out on strike. There has been a series of disputes at oil fields and terminal facilities over various issues over recent months.

Oil production in Libya is down from its peak of 1.6 million barrels a day prior to the ousting and murder of Gaddafi to its present figure of less than a million barrels a day.

Yemeni street cleaners threaten strike

"Hundreds of street cleaners protested outside President Hadi's residence Tuesday, threatening to go on strike if the government does not follow through on its promise to hire them as government workers," said the *Yemen Times*, June 27.

Street cleaners threatened to strike in April, but postponed their plans when Sana'a Mayor Abdulqader Hilal requested three months to meet their long-standing demands. That time has now expired.

Yahia Al-Mhaqeri, the head of the technical committee assigned to finalize procedures for providing the government jobs, told *Yemen Times* that 11,000 street cleaners were officially hired by the government, but could not provide any written documents to confirm this.

Sadeq Ali Ahmed, head of the preparatory committee of the Municipalities and Housing Union and director of waste facilities in Taiz, told *Yemen Times* that workers have not been provided with government jobs or the promised health insurance.

Nigerian lecturers in nationwide strike

University lecturers in the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) began a nationwide indefinite strike Monday. ASUU National President Isa Fagge told journalists the strike was the result of the failure of the federal government to implement the agreement it signed up to with the union in 2009.

The government had also reneged on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered into with the union in December 2011. The MOU was agreed after the union suspended its strike over the same issue more than two years ago.

The main issue at stake is the Academic Earned Allowance paid to

lecturers performing other duties such as exam invigilation and supervising post-graduates in addition to their teaching duties. The union is asking for a maximum earned allowance of N12,500 (\$78) per person. In the MOU the government agreed to put aside N100 billion (\$625 million) for the earned allowance payments, but is now saying it cannot afford that amount.

The nationwide strike of polytechnic lecturers belonging to the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) which began two months ago is still on-going.

Nigerian oil workers' strike suspended

A three-day strike by workers in the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) union which began Monday was suspended around midnight Tuesday following talks between the union and Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). The strike, which includes fuel delivery drivers, led to long queues at petrol stations across the country.

The union accused companies including Shell, Chevron and Exxon Mobil of only employing Nigerian born workers on a part-time basis, on poor pay and without proper benefits.

Kenyan teachers suspend strike

The strike by teachers in the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET) has been suspended for two weeks pending negotiations with the government. They began their strike on June 19, demanding their allowances be brought into line with those other groups such as the Teachers Service Commission.

A strike by teachers in the Kenya National Union of Teachers, which began last week, continues. Talks between government and the unions held July 3 broke down. The Education Secretary has threatened to withhold the pay of the more than a quarter of a million striking teachers who are demanding higher allowances.



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