Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

23 May 2014

Europe

Civil servants protest in Italy

Civil servants went on strike Tuesday over planned reductions in their salaries. Some 20,000 public employees in Rome walked out in the protest called by the three major unions, the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Union of Labour and the General Confederation of Labour. Those protesting included air traffic controllers and teachers.

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has set out sweeping austerity measures under conditions in which Italian families have already lost an average of 600 euros per year.

Icelandair pilots strike

Pilots working for the main Icelandic airline Icelandair held a second one-day strike on Tuesday, part of a programme of action, in their attempts to negotiate a new contract. They are represented by the Icelandic Airline Pilots Association.

The one-day strike took place on May 16. The pilots are due to hold a four-day strike beginning May 30. Their action also includes a ban on overtime.

Nurses in Iceland walk out

Around 500 nurses, members of the Icelandic Nurses' Association and the Union of Public Servants, held a one-day strike on Monday.

It was the second one-day strike by the nurses who are seeking pay and conditions parity with other Icelandic civil servants. Following the 2008 financial crisis, their wages were cut and subsequent pay settlements have left them lagging behind private-sector wages. They have vowed to carry out a series of one-day strikes until their demands are met.

Irish nurses resist government plans to impose further cuts

Nurses, members of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), are refusing to go along with ministry plans to use lower-paid staff to cover work currently done by higher qualified and hence higher paid staff.

The trade unions have collaborated with the government in the Haddington Road Agreement, part of which includes cuts in an attempt to save 290 million euros ($400 million) from the Health Service Executive (HSE) budget. However, HSE now says it needs to save an additional 80 million euros ($100 million) and has proposed "de-skilling" measures.

London Underground power workers to strike

Around 40 workers employed at the London Underground electric power control room are due to strike over the holiday weekend. The strike is due to begin midnight today (Friday) and end May 27 at 8 am. They are members of the Unite union and are responsible for providing the electrical power supply to the underground network. Due to safety concerns, the action would mean the completer closure of the system.

The workers are seeking compensation differentials in pensions and other entitlement rights that arose following their service being "tuped" (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment). The service was originally part of London Underground, but was sold off to outside organisations and then brought back under London Underground control.

Council workers in UK ballot over action

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Council workers in Northern Ireland, England and Wales are balloting over strike action against the government's proposed 1 percent pay offer, which is below the inflation rate.

The workers are members of the Unison trade union, which says that pay among many of its members has fallen after a series of government wage freezes and below-inflation pay agreements in the last years.

Some 600,000 Unison members are currently balloting. Members of the General Municipal union (GMB) are also to ballot on strike action. **Middle East**

Strike by medical staff at Lebanon hospital

Medical staff at the Rafik Hariri state-funded university hospital went on strike at the end of last week, with the strike continuing into this week. They are protesting arrears in salaries going back three months. They are also protesting shortage of medical equipment at the hospital. Employees describe the medical facility as being "on the verge of collapse."

Sudanese teachers in Abu Jabra protest over salary delay

Teachers in 21 schools in the Abu Jabra region of East Darfur in Sudan came out on strike Monday protesting salary delays. They have not yet received their April salary. They are determined to continue their strike till the finance ministry pays the arrears. **Africa**

Nigerian lecturers at Lagos university strike

Lecturers at Lagos State University launched an all-out strike May 20.

The Academic University Staffs Union, ASUU, Lagos chapter chairman said they would go ahead with the strike after management failed to agree to their demands. These include: the reversal of high Lagos State University tuition fees, a repeal of no vacancy no promotion policy and the implementation of the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions Amendment) Act 2012, which is in place in other universities.

Since March, there have been three final threats to strike, two in April and one in early May. The university Public Relations Officer said the management had not been officially informed of the strike.

Walkout by hospital workers in Windhoek, Namibia

Around 200 workers went out on strike at the Katutura State Hospital, Windhoek over pay and conditions on May 19. The strikers, including, cleaners, laundry workers, kitchen staff and ward assistants, demonstrated outside the acting senior medical superintendent's office, where she had locked herself.

The cleaners protested they are overworked and underpaid. They say they have not been paid overtime for the last four months and were only informed at the end of the month that overtime had been scrapped.

One cleaner referred to changed working conditions, saying, "Apart from refusing to pay us overtime, we are also not given days off. We work seven days in a week," adding. "We are overworked because the hospital is very much understaffed."

Tanzanian rail workers strike

Rail workers at the Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority, TAZARA, are striking to protest unpaid salaries, saying they won't return to work until they are paid, and that future payments are guaranteed.

The Chairman of the Tanzanian Railway Workers Union, Dares Salam Zone, said, "We want to be paid all the three months salaries [owing] and given assurance of future salary payments."

The strike began Monday to demand outstanding salaries for February, March and April. The union is demanding the payment for the three months to be paid all together as the rail workers have increasing debts.

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