

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

17 April 2015

German social care staff strike

Social workers and child care staff in Bavaria, Hessen, Saxony and Baden-Wurtemberg held a one-day strike April 8 against low pay. Their trade union, along with the Education and Science Workers' Union (GEW), is seeking a 10 percent pay increase for some 250,000 official unionised employees.

The action led to the closure of around 400 kindergarten schools in the state of Bavaria alone. Similar action was taken the previous day by care staff in the states of Hamburg and Lower Saxony.

Two-day strike by Finnish airport staff

Airport staff in Finland held a two-day strike Tuesday and Wednesday. The strike led to cancellations of flights, particularly those of Norwegian Air Shuttle, Europe's third largest budget airline.

The strike involved ground handling staff and members of the Finnish Aviation Union and the Finnish Cabin Crew Union, at Helsinki and Oulu airports. It was sparked after talks between the unions and the National Conciliator over a labour dispute broke down.

Staff at UK college strike over new contract

Lecturers at Greenwich College in southeast London held a one-day strike Wednesday, with further strikes planned for April 29 and May 1.

Many of the striking lecturers are members of the University and College Union and are taking action over the college's introduction of new contracts, which will increase the working week by two hours, reduce leave by two weeks a year and introduce unannounced inspections.

Strike of Dutch oil storage workers

Some 30 oil storage employees walked out of Royal Vopak's Europoort facility in Rotterdam for four hours beginning at 9 p.m., Tuesday evening. Royal Vopak is the world's largest independent oil storage company.

They are members of the CNV union, which represents around 250 employees at the site. The walkout followed a breakdown in pay talks between the union and management. The union has threatened further but as yet unspecified strike action.

Demand for oil storage facilities rose sharply this year, as companies responded to falling prices by storing larger amounts of oil in anticipation of a subsequent price rise.

Norwegian teachers continue strike over right to remain in union

A strike by teachers that began on March 18 at a privately run charter school in Norway is continuing.

The teachers are members of the Education Union Norway, which negotiates on behalf of the majority of teachers in the country. School management wants the teachers to sign up to an in-house union.

French air traffic controllers call off three-day strike

French air traffic controllers organised in the SNCTA union have called off a three-day strike due to begin Thursday. They held a two-day strike April 8 and 9.

The strike was in response to the French government's plans to increase the retirement age from 57 to 59 and restructure the French air traffic control network. France has an important role in controlling air traffic in Europe and has responsibility for most European flights, handling an average of 8,000 a day.

A planned four-day strike beginning April 29 is still due to proceed.

Radio France staff return to work

Staff at Radio France returned to work on Wednesday following a 28-day strike. Four out of the five unions involved voted the previous day to return to work.

Radio France is looking to cut costs and get rid of nearly 400 jobs, representing around 10 percent of the total workforce.

Staff employed at Queen's castle in UK vote to strike

Scores of wardens at the UK monarch's Windsor Castle residence voted to strike this week by a large majority.

The strike is scheduled to begin at the end of April. The wardens,

members of the Public and Commercial Services union, are expected to carry out extra duties such as acting as tour guides for visitors without extra pay. They start on salaries as low as £14,000.

Irish retail staff vow to continue dispute

Staff working for Dunnes department stores in the Irish Republic, represented by the Mandate union, held a one-day strike April 2. The department store workers demanded secure hours and pay, job security and the right to union representation. The action received overwhelming support.

The Dunnes Stores National Dispute Committee met Monday and proposed a three-pronged plan for further action. The plan proposed further as yet unspecified strike action, a march through Dublin in support of the Dunnes staff and mounting a legal defense of the 20 staff the union claims were victimised after taking part in the strike.

Irish bus workers vote to strike

Irish bus workers employed by Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann are planning to strike against the government's plans to open up 10 percent of their services to the private sector.

Workers in the SIPTU union have voted overwhelmingly for strike action. On Monday, SIPTU shop stewards threatened "substantial action" if their concerns were not addressed over the next 10 days. The other union involved in the dispute, the National Bus and Rail Union, called a one-day strike for May 1.

Strike threat by banana workers in Spanish Canary Islands

Banana plant workers represented by the UGT union in the Canary Islands are threatening strike action. Talks with the local growers' association have been dragging on for five months.

The union accuses the growers' association of wanting the current agreement to expire so that they are able to impose a new contract with lower wages and worse conditions.

The 12,000 banana workers in the islands currently earn an average of around €900 a month.

Czech Volkswagen's auto union threatens strike

Last week, unions at Volkswagen's Skoda Auto rejected a 3 percent pay offer from the company and threatened strike action. Initially, the unions were calling for a 6.5 percent wage increase but are now calling for a lower as yet undisclosed figure.

The union has been in talks with Volkswagen management over a new collective agreement. A new bonus figure has already been agreed. Workers were due to shorten their morning and afternoon shifts by one hour, a so-called hour minus, from Wednesday of this week as part of their campaign for a pay increase. They were also due to hold a protest

outside company headquarters. Further escalated action is being planned.

The Skoda plant is the Czech Republic's largest manufacturer, employing nearly 25,000 workers, with tens of thousands of associated jobs at supplier companies. The plant made a record profit of more than €800 million last year.

Gaza public-sector strike

Thousands of public sector workers in the Gaza strip held a one-day strike on Tuesday. They are members of the Union of Government Employees, employed in the ministries of labour, justice, public works and women's affairs.

They are protesting the ongoing non-payment of wages due to them by the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The strikers went on to hold a protest demonstration in front of the Legislative Council headquarters in Ramallah to demand the PA honour its agreement with the union.

In a statement, Hamas called on the government to honour the rights and conditions of the civil servants and end "discrimination."

Protest by UAE construction workers following death

On April 11, construction workers at the Emirates National School construction site in Ras Al Khaimah reportedly rioted after a worker fell to his death from the fifth floor of the site. The press reported his death as suicide.

According to media reports, the labourers' anger led them to set fire to the site and to damage 17 cars on the site. Police crowd control units and fire fighters were called to the site to deal with the protest and blaze.

Talks over Israeli Chemicals strike falter

The strike by Israeli Chemical workers at the Bromine Compounds and Dead Sea Works facilities is continuing. In mid-March, the National Labour Court instructed the company and the Histadrut trade union federation to hold talks to attempt to resolve the dispute.

The dispute began in February over Israeli Chemicals' plans to push through redundancies at the Bromine Compounds facility.

Histadrut said the talks were deadlocked, withdrew from them and intended to report this to the Labour Court.

South African local authority staff strike

South African local authority staff are continuing their strike at Ventersdorp municipality to demand the removal of the council authority. Workers have been on strike in the authority since April 7 over remarks made by the Ventersdorp mayor regarding the workers' rights to be members of the municipal workers' union SAMWU.

Among the demands put forward by the union are that directors without qualifications should be suspended, that there should be investigations

into corruption, that protective clothing should be supplied to workers that need it, and that all staff be covered for medical expenses.

was supported by 90 percent of the 1,000 employees at the Somair plant.

Nigerian judicial workers continue struggle

Members of JUSUN, the Nigerian judicial union, are continuing to strike in 15 of the 36 Nigerian states. They are demanding that finances from the federal government go straight into the coffers of the courts rather than to the state administration in order to pay unpaid wages going back five months.

A federal high court ruling that the finances must be paid directly to the judiciary, bypassing local government, has been ignored.

Lawyers working for JUSUN have put together a plan to freeze the accounts of Benue and Plateau states, in the hope that the rest of the states will follow.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

Ghanaian nurses strike over unpaid wages

Around 570 nurses employed in the national health service at the Ridge Hospital in Accra went on strike Tuesday, demanding payment of wages for March. Doctors at the hospital tried to maintain service in the nurses' absence.

Although management is in talks with the nurses, a press article reported that the Ghana Bureau of National Investigations security forces "stormed" the hospital in an attempt to force the nurses to return to work.

Demonstration by Ghanaian gold miners

Members of the Ghana Mine Workers' Union (GMWU), employed by Newmont Gold Ghana Limited, held a demonstration on April 7 over unpaid wages.

They held placards demanding the removal of the company's vice president of human resources in the African region. The miners said they had lost trust in his commitment to a collective contract agreement.

Those attending included 700 members of the Professional and Managerial Staff Union (PMSU) and 300 junior staff represented by the GMWU. They complained of inconsistencies and failures on the part of management over wages and conditions, though the Collective Agreement goes as far back as 2013.

GMWU rejects the current offer by the company but is resisting a call from its members for strike action.

Nigerian uranium miners' strike

Nigerian workers at the French nuclear group's uranium mine Areva Somair began a 72-hour strike on April 7. The strike was cut short by a legal ruling sending the miners back to work half a day before the official deadline to return to work.

The walkout was in response to unpaid bonuses, even though the SYNAMIN union claimed the workers had reached set targets. The strike