

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

25 September 2015

## Europe

### German Amazon employees strike

Staff at all the Amazon sites in Germany, including the Amazon Prime Instant Video site in Elmshorn, came out on strike on Monday. The strike, organised by the Ver.di trade union, will last until September 26 at the Bad Hersfeld, Leipzig, Rheinberg and Werne sites. The action at the Pforzheim and Elmshorn sites only lasted until the end of Monday's shift, while the Graben site resumed work on Wednesday.

Amazon workers recently won a 2.5 percent pay rise, but are pursuing a long-term claim to be paid in line with other German retail workers rather than as logistics staff.

### Greek bus drivers in Thessaloniki walk out

Bus drivers employed by the OASTH public transport company in Thessaloniki went on strike Wednesday over delays in wages payment. With over 600 buses off the road, the cities' bus stations were deserted. OASTH claimed it has not been able to get the money owed to it by the Finance Ministry to pay the wages.

### Overtime ban threat by firefighters in Irish capital

Firefighters in the Irish capital Dublin are set to begin an overtime ban on October 5. They are members of the Services Industrial Professional & Technical Union (SIPTU). The action is over the failure by Dublin City Council to fill 70 vacancies within the fire service.

SIPTU organiser Brendan O'Brien told the press, "Further to the ongoing failure by Dublin City Council and the management of DFB (Dublin Fire Brigade) to maintain agreed minimum safety critical staffing levels sufficient to provide safe systems of work our members have been left with no option but to commence industrial action."

### Refuse workers in London borough win pay rise

Around 100 refuse workers employed by the French transnational waste management company Veolia on contract to the London Borough of Bromley have won a 2 percent pay rise after threatening a three-day strike.

The refuse staff, members of the Unite union, voted by an

85 percent majority to strike after rejecting a 1.5 percent pay offer. They were demanding a 4 percent increase.

Following the intervention of the government mediation service ACAS, the union agreed to lift the strike threat in return for the 2 percent pay increase. The Bromley refuse workers have had to put up with heavier workloads after the number of rounds was cut.

### Planned action by London Underground staff

Members of the Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT) are set to hold a 48-hour strike beginning September 29 at 9 p.m.. Those set to strike are control staff on the heavily-used Waterloo and City line, part of the London Underground rail system, which handles around 35,000 city commuters each day. The dispute is over working conditions and a regrading claim.

### Actors in Scottish soap opera in dispute

Actors on the popular BBC Scotland soap opera, River City, are threatening strike action over claims of bullying and poor working conditions. The programme has a 100 member crew, half of whom are represented by the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU). The strike threat came in response to the sacking of a female first assistant director.

Relations between management and the River City crew became fractious after the appointment of a new executive producer in April of this year. An insider told the media, "Things have become intolerable since there was a management change a few months ago."

The assistant director who had had 30 years of experience in the industry was sacked on the spot for allegedly swearing and shouting. The insider speaking to the media stated, "Nobody had even heard or seen anything until she was sent home."

### Wildcat action by Scottish aircraft workers

Hundreds of aircraft fitters employed at Spirit Aerosystems in Prestwick, Scotland took wildcat strike action last week over cuts to previously-agreed allowances. The action started on the morning shift and was joined by those on the early afternoon shift. The company recently lost a vital Boeing wing order.

A worker at the factory told media, “There is increasing frustration with management and we have had enough. There are more suits than overalls in this place now and we need those suits to get us contracts, not cut our allowances.”

## **Middle East**

### **Strike at Iranian steel works**

A hundred workers at the Dorood Steel and Iron Company went on strike last Saturday. They were protesting nonpayment of their last three months wages, nonpayment of their insurance premiums and the sacking of 16 contract workers. The company employs a total of 140 permanent and contract staff. The strike was continuing at the time of writing.

## **Africa**

### **Kenyan teachers strike enters fourth week**

A strike by nearly 300,000 Kenyan teachers is now in its fourth week. The members of the Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education are seeking a pay increase of more than 50 percent.

The teachers argue that a pay deal settled in 1997 has only been partially fulfilled. A Kenyan court recently ruled that the teachers should be paid an increase of at least 50 percent but the central government is resisting claiming the pay deal has been settled in full.

The strike has led to the complete closure of public schools. One million pupils due to sit public exams next month are able to attend school but no one is present to teach them.

### **Kenyan medics protest nonpayment of wages**

Doctors at the Bungoma County hospital in Western Kenya came out on strike Tuesday. They were protesting the nonpayment of wages, lack of promotion among other issues. They are members of the Doctors Union. This latest strike by medics is part of a long running series of disputes in the Kenyan health service.

### **Kenyan medical research staff walk out**

Around 1,500 medical research staff at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in Kisumu walked off the job on Monday to protest nonpayment of their wages. The striking staff petitioned the KEMRI management board as well as the Centre for Disease Control management board

over the nonpayment of their wages. The institute claims a large sum of its funding went missing in March this year that has left it unable to meet its wages bill.

### **Strike threat by Nigerian oil workers**

The Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) issued a seven-day strike warning on Monday. It threatened the federal government with a nationwide strike over unresolved issues relating to Chevron contract workers.

The union is accusing Chevron Nigeria Limited of anti-labour practices. Some of the issues include the company using remuneration to pressure workers into joining a particular union and the practice of Chevron Labour Contractors laying off workers without due process.

### **Strike at Nigerian crop research unit**

Staff at the National Root Crops Research Institute in Umudike in Abia State began an indefinite strike on Tuesday. They are members of the Non Academic Staff Union at the institute. They walked out over a long list of issues that have not been addressed; they include non-implementation of the 2015 senior staff promotions and nonpayment of shift allowances.

### **Sierra Leone iron ore workers protest**

Hundreds of Sierra Leone iron ore miners came out on indefinite strike last Saturday. They are employed at the Chinese-owned Shandong Steel iron ore mine. They are protesting unfair treatment by the company over redundancy packages. The mine is laying off workers due to the slump in iron ore prices. Speaking to the press, union leader Thaimu Bundu Conteh stated, “Some opted to leave (but) to our greatest surprise they were only paid two months’ salary regardless of how many years they had worked for the company.”



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