

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

8 January 2016

Two day strike by Belgian rail staff

Members of the public transport union CSC Transcom and rail employees union CGSP Cheminots struck Wednesday and Thursday against plans by Belgian rail company SNCB to increase productivity.

The company wants to increase working hours. The unions are also protesting government measures to cut investment in the rail service that could lead to thousands of job losses.

The start of the strike had a big impact in Brussels, the Belgian capital, which was brought to a standstill. Train services to London and Paris were also affected.

Junior doctors in England announce strike

The British Medical Association (BMA) announced a strike by junior doctors on January 12 beginning at 8am for 24 hours providing only emergency cover.

Junior doctors are to strike for 48-hours beginning 8am on January 26, again only providing emergency cover. This will be followed by an all-out strike on February 10 between 8am and 5pm.

The 45,000 junior doctors in England are protesting against attempts by the Conservative government to impose a new contract, resulting in a loss in pay and increased working hours. A similar series of strikes called by the BMA was set to begin December 1 last year but was called off at the last minute. The BMA planned for the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to persuade the government to come up with a face saving formula to settle the dispute. With the ACAS talks unable to reach agreement, the BMA announced the new round of strikes.

The BMA has agreed to further talks with Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt and ACAS.

Strike by rail customer relations staff in UK city of Leeds

Northern Rail staff, working for the customer relations department in Leeds, England, struck Monday.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members were protesting plans to reclassify and downgrade their posts. They mounted a picket line at Leeds railway station.

Staff at Scottish university vote for strike

Staff at the University of Aberdeen voted by 3 to 1 to strike against the threat of redundancies. They are members of the University and College Union (UCU).

An earlier strike in June 2014 was called off when an agreement was reached against compulsory redundancies. UCU officials are continuing talks with university management.

Strike of Greek airport staff

Greek airport staff employed by the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority are to strike for 24-hours today. The strike is in opposition to the privatization of 14 regional airports in Greece and their sale to Germany's Fraport Group. They are members of the Federation of Civil Aviation Authority Unions (OSYPA)

Strike call by Air France staff

Two unions representing Air France staff have called for strikes this month against plans by the company to cut 3,000 jobs and to take disciplinary measures against several Air France staff.

The main CGT union representing Air France staff called for a strike on January 28 while the smaller union, Alter, representing around 10 percent of Air France staff called for a strike from Sunday through to January 13.

Last October, two Alter members were suspended after they remonstrated angrily against company executives trying to impose the job losses at a mass meeting in October last year.

Strike of refuse collectors in Georgian capital

Refuse workers in Tbilisi struck on Monday, following a strike last week. They work for refuse collection company Tbiliservice and are seeking a pay increase and payment in full of their bonus, known as a 13th salary.

The company is using agency staff to undermine the refuse workers and the mayor of Tbilisi has threatened to sack strikers if they continue their protest.

Strike by Ukrainian coal miners

Ukrainian coal miners in the Lviv region have been on strike since January 2. They are members of the Ukrainian Miners' Independent Trade Union and are protesting unpaid wages. Another union has announced it may join the action.

The striking miners have threatened to block custom checkpoints at Ukraine's border with Poland on January 12.

Strike threat at Israel's top-secret nuclear facility

Staff employed at Israel's Dimona nuclear reactor announced on Monday that they may call an all-out strike. They are currently taking action short of a strike.

The workers trade union accuses Dimona management of recruiting staff but refusing the union any oversight regarding the contracts being signed. They also accuse them of promoting staff to positions without the jobs being available to open competition.

Strike by sanitation workers in Jerusalem ends

A strike of sanitation workers in Jerusalem ended Sunday. The strike began December 31 with the dismissal of 170 workers because of a funding crisis of Jerusalem's municipality.

It ended when employees were re-hired following a NIS 17 million transfer of funds to the municipality from the Finance Ministry.

Mass support by Zimbabwe doctors and nurses for strike

Zimbabwean public service workers began a strike in the New Year over unpaid wages. More than 90 percent of nurses and 80 percent of doctors are supporting the strike.

They are threatening not to return to work until they receive their wages and a date for their November bonuses to be paid.

Workers complain they cannot afford to travel to work and have turned down a government offer of \$2 a day for transport cost and lunch made in order to break the strike. The government claims workers are turning up for work, but this was denied by strikers' representatives.

The only public sector workers paid in December were teachers and soldiers, but they were paid late. The rest of civil servants are at least in a month of arrears.

The government is caught by an internal political crisis and external commodity crisis as world mineral prices collapse. According to *Africa Report*, the government spends 80 percent of its budget on wages, chiefly on the army, police, teachers and nurses.

Although it brought in a law in last year to make it easier for employers to sack workers, the International Monetary Fund is demanding Zimbabwe reduce its workforce further, while international financial institutions refuse further loans to the country until it clears its debt.

Junior teachers strike in Nigeria

Teachers at junior secondary schools in Kwara state, Nigeria, began a strike Tuesday over non-payment of wages for the last four months.

A National Union of Teachers representative told the press that teachers cannot teach on empty stomachs.

Teachers in senior secondary schools who have no arrears of wages are not involved in the strike. A Kwara State spokesman claimed there are no funds to pay the salaries of junior teachers.

South African police attack striking farm workers

South African police attacked striking farm workers Tuesday. A hundred workers were injured in the attack and nine workers arrested.

The employees were demonstrating against their sacking. Three thousand farm workers were sacked after attempting to form a trade union in Mpumalanga Province. They began their strike in November.

Ugandan hospital workers strike in Lyantonde

Hospital workers in the town of Lyantonde, Uganda, began a strike December 24 over unpaid wages.

They have not been paid for five months and approached the hospital administration for a payment to carry them over the Christmas holidays, or the payment of all the wages owed. They were informed no money would be deposited in their accounts until after Christmas and probably not until in January. Causality, maternity, children's and surgery wards at the 100-bed hospital were affected.

No wages over Christmas for Ghana rail staff

Workers employed at the state-owned Ghana's Railway Corporation struck on December 18, demanding payment of overdue wages.

The strike has affected passenger services from Accra to Tema and Nsawam.

Wages have not been paid for three months and the strikers claim their demand for the removal of the railways board of directors has been ignored.



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