

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

1 April 2016

## German Amazon staff continue dispute

Verdi, the trade union representing staff at Amazon warehouses in Germany, has called further strikes against the company in a long-running pay dispute. Amazon employees want to be paid in line with other retail workers, rather than the current situation where they are paid a lower rate in line with logistical workers.

This week, Amazon staff at a warehouse in Graben walked out along with staff at the Leipzig depot. This follows strikes at various Amazon locations across Germany last week.

## Further strike by teachers in Scotland

Teachers in secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire, Scotland, were on strike Wednesday and Thursday over plans by the local authority to reorganize the way schools are run. They plan to cut down the number of principal teachers and combine departments into faculties. Teachers fear the plans will increase their workloads.

The members of the Educational Institute for Scotland have already held two one-day strikes and further strikes are planned for April 26 and 27.

## Museum of Wales staff walk out

Staff at the various Museum of Wales sites walked out over the Easter weekend. They are protesting plans to cut pay enhancements for weekends and bank holidays, after the Welsh government said it would cut its support grant to the museum by 4.7 percent. The workers are members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

There were no underground trips at the Big Pit National Coal Museum in Blaenavon last Friday or Monday. The National Waterfront Museum in Swansea was shut on Saturday, while the National Slate Museum in Llanberis was closed Sunday. Other museums and services were affected.

## Dispute on tram system in Irish capital continues

Staff on LUAS, the light rail (tram) system operated by Transdev in Dublin, have rejected a deal brokered by the Workplace Relations Commission between the company and the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU). The deal was for a pay rise of

up to 18 percent over 33 months.

A planned strike on Easter Sunday and Monday went ahead, with a further strike planned for this weekend together and two further dates in April.

LUAS drivers rejected the pay offer, which was based on productivity increases and for new entrants to be paid at 10 percent below existing pay. Transdev said the proposed two-tier pay scale was agreed by SIPTU in a deal signed in 2010.

## Bulgarian doctors protest health reforms

General Practitioners and doctors in private and municipal hospitals began a protest on Monday against government health reforms due to take effect today.

These involve changes to funding arrangements, which doctors say will exacerbate an already underfunded service. They are protesting against legislation which will make access to health services dependent on a fingerprint ID.

The GPs struck for one hour between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. and between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. It lasted all week, with GPs from different regions of the county taking part on different days until on Friday, all regions had taken part. There was also a two-day protest in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia.

The doctors provided emergency cover throughout their protest.

## Greek workers protest more austerity measures

Greek workers organised by the Stalinist-aligned PAME trade union took part in rallies in Thessalonica on Tuesday and in Athens on Thursday. They were protesting changes in social security, taxation and foreclosures being pushed through by the Syriza-led coalition government.

The civil servants unionADEDY called for a 24-hour strike on Thursday next week, including a rally in Klafthmonos Square in Athens scheduled to begin at 11 a.m.

## Walkout over pay by Portuguese postal staff

Around 75 percent of Portuguese postal workers, working for CCT, the Portuguese postal company, supported a strike call by the National Union of Workers of Post and Telecommunications Monday. They rejected the pay offer by CCT of 1.3 percent for this year. Other unions have accepted

the offer. Last year, the newly privatized CCT made an \$84 million profit.

### **Wildcat action on Finnish rail**

Finnish train conductors took a 24-hour wildcat strike at 3 a.m. on Thursday. They are protesting plans by the state railways company VR, to cut 214 jobs, the proposed job cuts comes on top of 150 already announced. The strike affected long distance trains.

### **Striking Cypriot nurses threatened by president**

Nearly 2,000 nurses, members of the PASYNO union, have been on strike since March 15. On Wednesday, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades threatened to use agency nurses to break the strike. The nurses are seeking a pay increase to recognize their degree level qualifications.

### **Protest by Jordanian airline staff**

Around 200 workers protested outside Royal Jordanian (RJ) airlines headquarters in Amman Saturday. They were protesting the arbitrary sacking of Zuhair Maharmeh.

Maharmeh worked in RJ's cargo department for 13 years and was sacked after posting on Facebook, criticizing the company's decision to raise health insurance premiums.

### **Jordanian lorry drivers protest relocation**

Some drivers working for freight haulage companies in the port city of Aqaba have gone on strike over plans by their companies to relocate operations to a new site, dubbed "Square 4". They say the only road to the new site is used by over 3,000 trucks a day and is known as the "death road." The drivers held a protest in Aqaba Sunday.

### **Rally by Kuwaiti oil workers**

Over 3,000 Kuwaiti oil workers gathered outside the headquarters of the Oil & Petrochemical Industries Workers Confederation (OPIWC) in Ahmadi, last Tuesday. They were protesting cuts in benefits and possible wage cuts. The state-owned Kuwaiti oil industry has around 20,000 employees.

### **Strike by expat Indian workers in Oman**

Over 60 workers, Indian nationals, employed by a company in Oman went on strike over nonpayment of wages. They are also protesting the lack of food supply and poor living conditions.

The workers had to pay recruitment agencies in India to get the jobs. Now the company is saying it will terminate their contracts and send them back to India.

### **Strike by Nigerian Lottery agency workers**

Workers employed by Nigeria's Premier Lottery came out on strike on Wednesday in defence of their jobs. The National Union of Lottery Agents and Employees say their terms and conditions have been changed so much that the union regards the action as a termination of employment.

Premier Lottery appears to have turned on the union because it had tried to collate the details of employees, responding to directives by federal government. The company has targeted trade union officials and some other workers.

### **South Africa refuse worker dispute in fourth week**

Four thousand workers on strike for four weeks at Pikitup Refuse Company Johannesburg South Africa have been suspended from their jobs. The strike is against Pikitup but also against the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) whose national leadership's recommendation was to return to work.

SAMWU is in discussions with the refuse company and says it is optimistic over an imminent settlement. The refuse workers are demanding an increase of between 20 and 40 percent in their wages to bring them into line with their counterparts at other refuse sites.

Disciplinary hearings started on Tuesday against workers defying back to work calls by the company and the union, as well of accusations of intimidation and violence.

### **South Africa public employees demonstrate**

Civil servants demonstrated at the mayoral offices in Baviaans, Eastern Cape South Africa, over work conditions and casual labour. Workers and their families entered the mayor's offices. Their demands include payment of wage arrears, for casuals who have been on the payroll for years to be put on the books, for protective clothing and for a wage increase.

In the ensuing fracas, the mayor was knocked unconscious and a man is charged to appear in court. The South African Municipal Workers Union denounced the violence as the "work of criminals."

### **South African banana farm workers strike**

The Confederation of South African Trade Unions called a strike in the province of Mpumalanga in support of 300 farm workers sacked for trying to establish a trade union.

The strike began on March 29, with COSATU predicting the province will be brought to a standstill. Three thousand farm workers went on protected strike in November last year to demand the establishment of a branch of the Food and Allied Workers Union at the Umbhaba Estate Farm, which produces bananas.

### **South African education employees protest over snake threat**

According to the South African *Times Live*, education workers at Mpumalanga's State education offices in Kanyamazane near Mbombela have been on strike for the last three weeks over fear of animal attacks, particularly snakes.

Black Mamba and Python snakes have occupied some of the office buildings, posing a threat to lives. They also fear the trip to work as the surrounding area is occupied by snakes and a pack of vicious dogs. The department of public works claims to have been dealing with the situation prior to the strike.

### **Sudanese doctors protest lack of equipment**

Doctors are continuing their strike in the El Gezera state capital, Wad Medani, in Sudan. They are protesting the lack of oxygen and emergency equipment on the hospital wards. Doctors are demanding the government acts to resolve the crisis in hospitals throughout the state.

The medics are responding to emergency demands only, as the strike continues into the second week, and while they wait for the authorities to act.

### **Nigerian state employees give strike deadline**

State employees in another Nigerian State have threatened to strike over unpaid wages. Oyo State's Trade Union Congress, Nigeria's Labour Congress and the Joint Negotiating Committee have given the state government until April 7 to respond, saying they cannot guarantee industrial peace beyond that date.

One of the workers' demands is for the payment of five months wages. Union officials had secured a memorandum of understanding at previous meetings on a plan to resolve the grievances with the government, but these have been reneged on.



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