

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

13 May 2016

Teaching staff in northwest England strike

Teachers in two schools around Manchester began a strike on Tuesday over threats of redundancy. Staff at Swinton High School in Salford, members of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), began a two-day strike while National Union of Teachers (NUT) members at Prestwich Arts College began a three-day strike. Two teachers at the art college have been served with compulsory redundancy notices to take effect in August.

School janitors in Glasgow to strike

Over 130 school janitors, members of the Unison union, are to strike for five days from Monday. They are employed by Cordia, an arms-length company operated by Glasgow City Council. They are responsible for cleaning and maintenance tasks in schools and want to be treated on a par with staff employed directly by the council. Council employees are paid between £500 and £1,000 a year for undertaking heavy or dirty duties. To date there have been nine days of strikes in support of their claim. The janitors plan to protest outside the council headquarters on Monday and will hold a protest on Wednesday outside the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh.

Blacklisted UK workers win compensation

Around 250 UK building workers are set to receive around £10 million in compensation as a result of their names appearing on a blacklist. The award breaks down to about £40,000 for each worker. The blacklist was used by major construction firms to not take on building workers who had a record of raising health and safety concerns and other legitimate concerns. In many cases, this led to dismissal and failure to secure employment in the building industry. Further payouts are in the pipeline. The blacklist was created by the Consulting Association, which after revelations in the press was raided by the Information Commissioner's Office and was found to be operating illegally. Settlements were reached after several unions took legal action against building companies such as Balfour Beatty, Costain and McAlpine, which used the blacklist.

Walkout by UK university academic staff

University staff in the UK including lecturers, researchers and library staff are to walk out May 25 and 26 in a pay dispute. They are members of the University and College Union and have rejected a 1.1 percent pay offer. They are threatening to take action later in the summer, which could disrupt the allocation of university places to A level students.

Possible ballot of ferry staff at UK port of Dover

The Rail Maritime and Transport union has announced it may ballot its members at the port of Dover after two of its members were dismissed by the ferry operator P&O Ferries. The two were sacked following an alleged near miss incident.

Continuing Norwegian hotel strike escalates

The strike by Norwegian hotel and restaurant staff is now in its third week. Members of the United Federation (Fellesforbundet) are seeking a pay increase and for the right of the union to be able to conduct local negotiations with hotels and restaurants. The strike continues to spread, with over 900 members of the union in six counties joining last weekend. On Monday, over 100 staff at the Hotel Norge in Bergen joined the strike, with another nearly 300 joining it today. Currently there are around 7,000 employees from nearly 800 hotels and restaurants on strike.

Strike threat by Greek teachers

Teachers organised by the regional secondary school teachers' union, ELME, are threatening to strike during the upcoming exam season. It would be to protest shrinking budgets and growing staff vacancies. A decision as to whether to go ahead will be announced on May 21.

Pay increase follows strike threat by Hungarian Tesco staff

Around 14,000 non-management staff working for the multinational supermarket firm Tesco in Hungary are to receive a pay rise averaging around 15 percent from the beginning of July. Previous negotiations in March over a pay increase floundered and staff formed a strike committee

and threatened action. According to the KASZ union, Tesco management then came up with the pay offer which has been agreed by both sides.

Support for Egyptian journalists' protest

Delegations of doctors, lawyers and engineers joined a protest on Thursday in support of journalists outside the headquarters of the journalist union building in Cairo. The journalists held a sit-in protest against the arrest of two of their colleagues on May Day, when police entered the union building and took them into custody. The two, who work for the *January Gatenews* web site, are accused of organising anti-government protests.

Israeli lifeguards protest working conditions

Histadrut, the Israeli trade union federation, has instructed its members in the National Lifeguards Association not to work beyond 2 p.m. each day. The beach season began this week and lifeguards will be deployed at over 140 regulated beaches to give safety cover. The partial strike comes after two years of negotiations between the union federation and Israeli municipal authorities. In dispute is the gap between pay and working conditions for newly appointed lifeguards compared to those with seniority. A separate dispute, a strike by driving test examiners, is now in its seventh week.

Protest by migrant domestics in Lebanon

Last weekend, several hundred migrant domestic workers staged a march through the Lebanese capital, Beirut. The overwhelmingly female domestic staff, mainly from the Philippines, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, were protesting against their working conditions. Under the kafala system, domestic staff are sponsored by their Lebanese employer, the family they work for, and are not allowed to change jobs and are not covered by Lebanese legislation relating to working conditions. This leaves them open to mistreatment and abuse. There are instances of suicide among domestic staff resulting from their mistreatment. Although domestic staff set up a union last year, it is not recognised by the Lebanese Labour Ministry.

Ugandan hospital staff demand payment of wages

Trainee doctors, pharmacist and nurses are on strike at the Mulago Teaching Hospital, Uganda. They are joining hospital workers across the country demanding payment of months of outstanding wages. Wages for interns dropped last year from Sh800, 000 (\$240) to Sh600, 000 (\$180) per month. The trainee doctors already live in slum dwellings as a result of inadequate wages and are now being thrown onto the streets unable to pay any rent. If the interns complain about their conditions, management threatens to revert them back to the start of their internship.

Judicial workers in Nigeria resume strike

Employees in the judiciary department in Ondo state Nigeria came out on strike again Tuesday. A long-running dispute over the separation of judicial payment from the control of state government has been contested since 1999. A law was introduced that year to separate the state from judiciary funds, but it was not agreed on until a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2014. The state government has since reneged on the MoU. Members of the Judicial Staff of Nigeria (JUSUN) have also been deprived of wages over a four-month period and say they will not return to work until the state adheres to the constitution. Courts have been locked up in the state and JUSUN members have stopped workers from entering judicial premises.

Nigerian resident doctors strike

Resident doctors in federal hospitals throughout Nigeria began a five-day strike Wednesday. Originally planned as an indefinite strike, the five-day warning strike follows a 30-day ultimatum by the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD). They are demanding arrears of wages that have gone unpaid over many years, including last December's salaries. A court ruling in favour of the doctors has been ignored by hospital authorities. NARD also wants doctors unfairly sacked to be recalled. Poor patients dependent on state hospitals will be at the mercy of extortionate private hospitals.

Zimbabwe rail workers have gone unpaid for over a year

Workers employed by National Railway of Zimbabwe are continuing their strike. The Zimbabwe Minister of Transport was reported to have said he has accrued \$3 million in resources to pay towards their wages. In some cases, wages have not been paid for over a year. The strike began in March. The funding for wages has been raised from some of the largest operations in Zimbabwe such as Tongaat Hullet, the sugar cane grower and refiner. The Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railways Union said it was not aware of any money being disbursed by the government for wages.



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