

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

8 July 2016

Irish nurses consider proposals to end work-to-rule

It was announced Monday that nursing staff at the Our Lady of Lourdes hospital in Drogheda, who have been carrying out a work-to-rule since the end of May, are considering proposals from the Workplace Relations Commission to end their dispute. They began the work-to-rule to protest against staff shortages at the hospital, with reportedly over 100 unfilled posts.

A Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) organiser told press that SIPTU members will consider the proposals and then be balloted on them.

Irish library staff vow to fight reductions in service

Library staff represented by the Impact union in Ireland have voted by an 87 percent majority in favour of industrial action to oppose plans to amalgamate the library services provided by 12 local council areas. Impact fears the amalgamation will lead to the loss of posts and service provision.

Impact says it will demand the reversal of the plans at a meeting of the Lansdowne Road Agreement Oversight Group, which is due to meet on July 20.

Italian airline staff strike in defence of conditions

A strike this week by staff at the Italian airline Air Alitalia led to the cancellation of more than 140 scheduled flights. Staff working for the airline Meridiana also took part, which led to the cancellation of 20 flights.

They took the action following the abolition of free flights for pilots and other airline staff from different parts of Italy to reach their base in either Rome or Milan. The workers are members of the Fit-Cisl labour union.

Bus workers in UK city of Leeds hold further strikes

Bus drivers and host staff employed by First Bus Leeds are holding a 24-hour strike today, to be followed by a six-hour strike beginning 4 a.m. on July 11. They are members of the Unite union and have already held two 24-hour strikes in pursuit of a pay rise.

The two 24-hour strikes were supported by around 1,000 bus staff based at the Bramley and Hunslet Park depots in Leeds. The company was only able to run a skeleton service using scab drivers mainly from management, including managers from neighbouring First Bus companies such as Bradford.

They are seeking a 36p an hour pay rise. The latest offer from the company of an extra 38p an hour spread over three years was rejected by the bus staff who have put up a determined fight to win their dispute. Twenty-two strikers were suspended following allegations that they brought the firm into disrepute due to comments posted on a private Facebook page.

Bus staff in south-west Britain continue their strike action

Over 100 drivers working for First Hampshire and Dorset Bus which covers the Weymouth area in the southwest of England are into the fourth week of a series of strikes against poverty pay. They currently earn £8.80 an hour while drivers in nearby towns are on higher rates.

A series of 24-hour strikes have been planned for next week on top of 24-hour strikes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week. The drivers are members of the Unite union.

Greek rail staff strike in opposition to sell-off plans

Greek rail workers employed by Greek Train OSE held a 24-hour strike Wednesday in opposition to plans by the Syriza-led government to privatise the whole of the rail system.

The privatisation is part of the deal imposed by Greece's creditors for bailing out Greek debt. The rail employees are members of the Panhellenic Federation of Rail Workers (POS). The Athens metro which serves the airport also came to a standstill. The 24-hour strike follows a series of partial strikes held since June 28. Tram employees in Athens walked out for four hours at 10 a.m. and again later in the day.

Strike by French air traffic control staff

Protesting against the French labour law reforms, air traffic controllers went on strike Wednesday. It led to the cancellation of around 200 flights by three budget airlines, but reportedly had little impact on Air France flights.

The strike was organized by the USAC-CGTA union. The strike was the 13th strike by air traffic controllers in the last three months. The air traffic controllers took part in marches and demonstrations along with other French workers against the labour reforms.

Demonstrations took place in Paris, Marseilles, Nantes, as well as other towns.

Zimbabwean civil servants strike over unpaid wages

Public-sector workers went on strike for three days in Zimbabwe Tuesday, demanding payment of their June salaries. Workers, particularly teachers and nurses, have been called out by a body called Apex Council, an organisation representing several civil service unions.

The government have found the resources to pay the police and the armed forces for June, but only promised to pay teachers and nurses' salaries sometime in July.

The day before the strike was called, armed police attacked demonstrating taxi and minibus drivers around Harare, Zimbabwe's capital. The bus and taxi operators were protesting against the streets being blocked off to create the conditions for police to demand bribes. The country is in severe economic crisis and is looking towards the International Monetary Fund and other donors to come up with loans.

Motor industry national strike in South Africa

The National Union of Metalworkers of South African (NUMSA) has called a dispute with the Retail Motor Industry. The union is demanding a 20 percent pay increase, improvement in medical cover and housing allowance as part of a one-year pay deal.

NUMSA has 100,000 members working in the motor retail industry.

The current three-year agreement between NUMSA and the industry comes to an end in August. NUMSA is looking to return to one-year deals with the new contract.

The dispute is likely to go to arbitration with the union threatening a crippling strike in the auto industry if it does not secure a deal in its favour.

Breakdown recovery workers strike in South Africa

Workers in the South African auto recovery industry have gone on strike demanding a 12 percent pay increase and improvements in pensions and medical cover. The South African Transport and Allied Workers Union are also demanding their officials are paid for time off while on union business, as well as calling for outsourced work to be brought in-house and a 13-month bonus cheque at year end. The employers are offering a flat 6 percent increase on wages.

South African post office workers strike

Striking South African Post Office workers have been sacked for going

on strike. Two hundred and twenty eight members of the Influential Information and Communication Union of South Africa were sacked, partly for taking action in defence of their suspended union secretary general and other workers.

The strike was also over concerns that post office management wanted to go back on agreements made last year over a 6.5 percent wage increase and the employment of casuals. Last week, the Chief Executive Officer of the post office, using contested evidence, successfully got a court injunction against the strike, claiming vandalism and theft by the postal workers.

South African parliamentary staff strike threat

South African parliamentary staff are threatening to go back out on strike over bonuses and deductions made from staff wages in the aftermath of a strike in 2015. The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) is attempting to head off the strike by getting the legislature to implement last year's agreement.

Last month, NEHAWU carried out a protest in parliament and members of the union were suspended, causing the union to declare a strike this week if those suspensions were not lifted. A spokesman for parliament said if the union goes on strike, it would be "unauthorised, unprotected and illegal."

Civil servants oppose Nigeria labour leaders sell-out

Civil servants in Ekiti state are continuing their strike, after a previous month long strike had been called off. The strike was to demand the payment of six months of unpaid wages and was called off by the trade union organisations, who accepted the payment of just one month's wage arrears in settlement. These are the Trade Union Congress, the National Labour Congress and the Joint Negotiating committee.

Workers did not sign up to the agreement and regard the deal as a sell-out.

A previous offer from the local government to pay two months of unpaid wages to settle the dispute was rejected by the unions.

Kenyan tea plantation workers close factories

Tea plantation workers who went on strike last week have brought 11 tea processing factories to a halt. The strike is a result of a judicial award to tea workers of a 30 percent wage increase, retiring at 60, one rest day a week, medical allowance of sh. 30,000 (US\$295) and baggage allowance of sh. 30,000 upon termination of employment.

The employers are complaining the settlement will bankrupt them, saying they are losing around KS300 million (US\$3 million) a week. A lobby of 10,000 tea producers demanded the arrest of the leadership of the Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union for bringing down the industry. Tea companies say there could be a loss of 50,000 jobs, as they look for scab labour to take the striking workers' jobs.

Namibian dam strikers sent back to work

Workers at the Salina Spa dam project in Namibia have been sent back to work by their union, complying with a court order, which ruled that the strike was illegal.

The five-day unofficial strike was over the company not complying with agreed work practices under the Project Labour Agreement and several issues with the way the site was being managed.



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