

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

27 January 2017

## Strike by French power workers

Power workers at the French state-owned Power Company EDF held a 28-hour strike beginning at 5 p.m. Wednesday. A further 28-hour strike is planned for 5 p.m. on January 30. These follow a similar strike last week. The workers are opposing a pay freeze in the electricity and gas industries.

Unions representing professional staff at the energy company Uniper—a spinoff from the E-ON power company—have announced they will strike on January 31.

## Train conductors in southern England hold one-day action

Train conductors working for Thames Govia Link service, Southern Rail, which covers the southeast area of England running services into London, held a one-day strike Monday.

It was the latest in a long-running dispute over the move by the company to introduce Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains. The rail unions have done everything possible to sabotage a united offensive by rail workers at Southern and train companies nationally, who are also seeking to impose DOO.

The latest strike was called by the RMT, who months ago called on its members to sign contracts agreeing to DOO train services. Ahead of the strike, the ASLEF train drivers union called off a three-day strike due to take place immediately after Monday's action by RMT members. ASLEF is now engaged in talks with management to end the dispute, under the auspices of the Trades Union Congress.

## London Midland railway conductors ballot

Conductors at the London Midland train operating company are being balloted for strike action in opposition to the imposition of security guards on trains. The Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) union is balloting 523 of its members with the ballot closing February 2.

The union said the recent move to impose security guards was carried out without any agreement.

London Midland said the security guards were on trains to “provide extra eyes and ears” and to “look out for things like fare evaders, smoking on trains and feet on seats.”

All these duties are traditionally carried out by the conductor and, like the policies of train companies nationally to impose Driver Only Operated services, are a means to eliminate conductors from trains.

London Midland operates the busy West Midlands rail franchise in

England.

## Walkout by London underground staff

Drivers on the London Underground's Central Line East held a 24-hour strike beginning at 9 p.m. Wednesday. The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members are in dispute over Transport for London's plans to unilaterally reassign drivers' routes.

## Cleaners at Kings College, London strike

Cleaners at Kings College, part of the University of London, began a two-day strike yesterday. The Unison union members had voted by a 98 percent majority in favour of the action after their employer, Servest, which is contracted to provide cleaning services at the college, announced plans in November to cut jobs and reduce working hours.

This announcement came under conditions of staff shortages and increased workloads. Over 50 academics at the college signed a letter in support of the cleaning staff, accusing Servest of disrespecting and undervaluing staff.

## Bus workers in Oxford, England to ballot

More than 400 members of the Unite union employed by the Oxford Bus Company—part of the Go Ahead group—are to be balloted over a possible strike. The balloting will take place between January 30 and February 20. A range of issues are involved in the dispute, including pay, disciplinary procedures and leave arrangements.

The ballot is being held after negotiations between management and Unite broke down.

## Ferry staff in London to hold series of walkouts

The 36 staff employed by Briggs Marine Contractors Ltd, which runs the Woolwich ferry service across the river Thames in East London on behalf of London Transport, are to hold a series of 24-hour strikes.

Crew, engineers and office staff, who are members of the Unite union,

are set to hold a 24-hour day strike today and on the subsequent 11 Fridays. They are taking action over allegations of bullying and sexual harassment by management and over health and safety concerns.

The ferry service carries a high volume of passengers and vehicles and the strikes are likely to cause severe disruption.

### **Unison ends Glasgow council IT staff dispute**

IT staff employed by Glasgow City Council in Scotland, in a joint venture with outsourcing company Serco, have ended their dispute. The Unison members held a series of staggered strikes throughout November and December in opposition to plans by the council to privatise the service.

Under the deal, staff currently employed will retain their link with the council on a secondment basis and will continue to have Unison representation and there will be no compulsory redundancies. The deal agreed by Unison creates a two-tiered workforce, and newly-appointed staff will not have such protections.

### **Refuse staff in Huddersfield, England in dispute over pay**

Staff working for the Suez Company, which runs five waste and recycling plants in the UK town of Huddersfield on behalf of Kirklees council, held a one-day strike Wednesday. They are members of Unite and are in dispute over pay.

### **Social work staff at Kirklees protest heavy caseloads**

Social work staff working for Kirklees council children's services in West Yorkshire are set to strike today in protest at heavy caseloads and bullying by management.

Kirklees council threatened to go to court to seek an injunction to prevent the strike going ahead. To date there has been no legal action against Unison holding the strike.

Due to the high turnover of staff, the council has recruited agency staff to fill vacancies. According to Unison, around 25 percent of staff are agency workers.

### **Nuclear plant workers in northwest England strike**

Nuclear plant employees at the Fellside CHP plant in Sellafield, northwest England, held a 24-hour strike on Thursday to demand better terms and conditions. The strike followed an overtime ban.

The 19 Unite union members are to hold further 24-hour strikes on February 2, 9 and 16.

### **Protest by Northern Irish health staff over pay gap**

Hospital staff at the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) and the Tyrone County Hospital held a one-hour lunchtime protest Wednesday to protest the wage gap suffered by health workers in Northern Ireland. The Unison members are demanding the Irish Assembly bring in a "real living wage" for hospital staff.

### **Hungarian Audi workers establish strike committee**

Employees of the German car manufacturer Audi's subsidiary in Gyor, northwest Hungary, have set up a strike committee to push for higher wages. They are members of the AHFSZ union. AHFSZ said the company's pay offer was not acceptable and have opposed the company's decision not to go ahead with a planned bonus scheme. The union is to continue talks with the company aimed at ending the dispute.

### **Irish hospital staff to be balloted for strike**

The Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) is balloting its members working as hospital support staff, with the result to be announced February 13.

The issues involved include the non-implementation of agreements over job evaluation and incremental pay rises for interns that were agreed as part of the Landsdowne Road national union-government agreement. SIPTU is also calling for concessions granted to some emergency department staff last year to be extended to include hospital support staff.

### **One-day strike planned by Irish food ingredient manufacturer staff**

Staff at the Kerry Group food ingredient plant in County Cork, Ireland, are due to hold a one-day strike on January 30 to protest the refusal of management to attend a conciliation meeting with the Workplace Relations Commissions (WRC). Management failed to attend a planned meeting, to be held under the auspices of the WRC, due to have taken place on November 28.

There was a 94 percent majority vote by the members of SIPTU to strike. The company is seeking to change working conditions, including changes in shift patterns, job rotation and other matters.

### **Turkish metal workers win concessions**

Over 2,000 workers at three major multinational electrical equipment manufacturers have won concessions over pay and conditions. In face of opposition from the government, the members of the Birlesik Metal Is union struck on January 20.

On Monday, in talks brokered by the Ministry of Labour, the Electromechanical Employers' Association—representing the three companies—agreed to a new two-year agreement. Employees had demanded a three-year deal.

### **Israeli tax authority staff push for pay rise**

Around 6,000 Israeli tax authority staff are pushing for a pay rise and, according to their union, are prepared to strike in pursuit of the claim. They are demanding a 38 percent pay increase spread over the next five to seven years.

They are tying this demand to their cooperation with a new computer system being introduced by the tax authority.

### **Namibian fish farm workers protest**

On January 18, workers at a Namibian fish farm and processing company petitioned managers to refrain from illicit practices. Three hundred employees working for Embwiinda/Cadilu Company in Walvis Bay protested illegal sackings, nepotism and favouritism. They protested staff reductions and a ban on overtime, which they say means they have to work four times faster.

A spokesman for the workforce said they are demanding a worker representative to sit in at disciplinary meetings to bring transparency to the process. A further demand is for job vacancies to be advertised within the company, with the right of everyone to apply.

### **Nigerian university unions call off strike**

Staff unions at Nigerian universities called off a five-day national warning strike on January 19. Three unions under the umbrella of the Joint Action Committee (JAC), the National Association of Academic Technologists, NAAT, the Non Academic Staff Union, NASU, and the Senior Staff Union of Nigerian Universities, SSANU, suspended the strike after negotiations.

JAC had previously given 35 days' notice of its five-day strike and implemented it when the government did not respond. JAC called its members out when the demand for carrying out a 2009 agreement was ignored. The demands included university funding, payment of earned allowances, maintaining teachers' training appointments as well as a call for an inquiry into corruption at the universities. The condition for the return to work was based on the reaffirmation, again, of the 2009 agreement and the instigation of a corruption inquiry.

Union representatives called on the government negotiators, the Minister of Labour and Employment and the Minister of Education not to renege on the agreement.

### **Kenyan Clinicians union call off dispute**

Clinicians who were due to strike Monday alongside doctors were instructed to continue to work by their union. The clinicians are being asked to carry out a scabbing operation, while 4,000 doctors were issued sacking notices this week.

The Kenyan Union of Clinical Officers, in collaboration with the Council of Governors Health Committee, called off the planned strike on the basis of forming a "task force" to look into their grievances.

The strike began seven weeks ago. Reports indicate that new short-term

contracts in place of permanent employment are to be offered to new employees and/or those returning to work.

Seven members of the Medical Practitioners Pharmacists and Dentists Union were due to be jailed on Thursday for leading an illegal strike.

The doctors and other medical employees are striking for the implementation of a 2013 collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Although the government had declared no more negotiations with the doctors would be held after dismissal letters had been sent out, they have called for further talks on renegotiating the 2013 CBA.

### **Kenyan university staff continue strike**

Kenyan university staff at the country's 33 universities are continuing their national strike, which began on January 18. They are demanding the implementation of their 2013-2017 collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

The University Academic Staff Union said the university negotiating body, the Inter Public Universities Council Consultative Forum, (PCCUF), has offered a 3 percent wage increase but not addressed the CBA claim.

Three unions are involved in the strike: the Universities' Academic Staff Union (UASU), Kenya University Staff Union (KUSU) and Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotel, Educational and Allied (KUDHEA). They view the success of the 2017 claim as being tied up with a new 2018-2021 CBA deal.

### **Ivory Coast public sector general strike**

Public service unions in the Ivory Coast are continuing a general strike, which began January 9. The Inter-Union of Civil Servants of Côte d'Ivoire put forward five demands to the government, including pension protection, pay increases, premium payments and payment of increments linked to promotions.

New pension rules introduced in 2012 saw the retirement age go up, pension contributions increase but the value of the pension fall by between 30 and 50 percent.

The strike followed a mutiny of soldiers demanding to be paid their salaries and bonuses.

A demonstration Saturday in Cocody, called by firefighters, was joined by teachers, health professionals and civil servants, mutinous soldiers and some gendarmes. They came under attack by police with gas canisters.

Although the Inter-Union of Civil Servants confirmed they were to continue the strike Saturday, the union president called it off on Sunday but most public sector workers refused to return to work. Firefighters were out on the streets again Monday.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**