

Portuguese public sector workers walk out as wave of strikes hit Nigeria

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

2 June 2017

Portuguese public sector strike

Many schools and hospitals across Portugal were hit by a one-day strike on May 26 as public sector workers demand pay increases, following years of stagnant wages after the 2008 financial crisis. They are also demanding better promotion opportunities and retirement terms, as well as an end to short-term contracts.

Portugal has been ravaged by the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity measures imposed by the IMF and European Central Bank. State owned companies recently privatized include the CTT (postal service), TAP Portugal (airline) and ANA (airports). The Fenprof teacher union announced further strikes and protests for June.

Greek rail workers strike

Greek rail staff employed by the state-owned Trainose held a one-day strike Thursday to protest the state of the rail infrastructure and working conditions.

Initially, the strike had been scheduled to take place over three days beginning Tuesday but was reined back by the trade unions who are largely allied with the pro-austerity Syriza government. The strike affected the Athens metro and the Athens International Airport link.

Meanwhile, head teachers in Greece are opposing the Syriza government's plan to impose stricter criteria on the appointment of school principals. The measures, due to start shortly, are part of a raft of austerity measures Syriza is imposing, at the behest of the European Union, to tighten the criteria for civil service promotions, aimed at cutting staff. The Doe primary school teachers' union said it would boycott the new plans.

Protest by Bulgarian lorry drivers

Bulgarian lorry drivers held protests at the Greek/Bulgarian border crossing of Kulata on Monday. The protests, coordinated by the Union of Transport Workers, were against the long holdups experienced by lorry drivers.

Following talks between representatives of the lorry drivers and Bulgarian officials, an agreement was reached to speed up the crossing by

bringing in three lane queues. They also agreed to make the weighing of lorries more transparent by having large screens so the driver can see what weight the lorry carries.

The drivers are demanding that empty TIR (international route) lorries are not weighed when going through the crossing. They are to resume protests if this measure is not introduced.

Protests planned by Hungarian Tesco supermarket staff

Tesco supermarket workers are to organize a nationwide demonstration in pursuit of higher wages. The Union of Commercial Employees together with the Independent Union of Commercial Workers also plan a go-slow combined with demonstrations outside stores.

Protest by Irish teachers

Around 300 teachers held a protest outside the Irish parliament Tuesday, calling for "fair pay" for newly qualified teachers. Currently they are on a lower pay scale than experienced teachers.

The protest was called by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and was supported by members of the Teachers' Union of Ireland and the Association of Secondary Teachers.

Strikes by glass workers in southwest England

Workers at two companies, which are part of the Specialist Building Products Group in the south west of England, have voted to strike. The workers, who are members of the Unite union, are protesting what is described as a "miserly pay offer."

Staff at Sierra Windows in Paignton voted by a more than 80 percent majority to strike and are already involved in a series of rolling days of action. The latest took place on Wednesday. A series of eight 48-hour strikes are scheduled to take place in June and July. Workers at DB glass, based in Newton Abbot, are also scheduled to hold 48-hour stoppages, on four occasions in June and two in July.

UK adhesive workers strike

Workers at the adhesive manufacturer Bostik in Stafford, England struck Tuesday through Thursday this week to oppose the company's two percent pay offer. One hundred and thirty hourly-paid staff at the factory voted by a 97 percent majority to authorize the Unite union to call a strike. The walkout follows six months of negotiations. A further eight days of strikes are scheduled throughout June and July.

UK equality staff hold further strike

Staff working for the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) based in Cardiff walked off the job last week in a five-day strike. The members of the Public and Commercial Services union are opposed to job and budget cuts. Several EHRC offices throughout the UK are taking strike action on a rolling basis. Next week EHRC workers in Manchester will strike throughout the week.

Lecturers to strike at UK colleges

Academic staff employed by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) at Manchester and Crewe, are planning to strike on June 20 and 21. The University and College Union (UCU) members are fighting job losses that will result from the closure of the Crewe campus.

A two-day strike was due to have taken place last week but suspended following the May 22 Manchester bombing. UCU has proposed the government conciliation service ACAS become involved in the dispute but MMU management has refused the offer.

UK employer's legal bid to end strike fails

The 1,400 warehouse staff employed by the retail chain Argos at their warehouse distribution sites at Basildon, Bridgewater, Burton on Trent, Castleford, Heywood and Lutterworth ended a two-week strike on Wednesday.

The workers, members of Unite, are opposing Argos' plans to close some of the sites, transferring some staff to other sites. The strike began when the firm announced that nearly 500 workers would be transferred from its hub in Lutterworth, Leicestershire, to Wincanton logistics in Kettering.

As part of a cost cutting operation, the firm also plans to bring in contract staff. Last Friday, Argos made a second legal attempt to end the strike but the High Court rejected its attempt.

Casual employees at South Africa University demand permanent status

Casual workers at Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa were attacked by police as they attempted to picket the academy's gates. Around 100 workers mainly consisting of non-academic staff, i.e. cleaners, security guards and caterers, stopped buses entering the university.

The one-week strike is demanding full-time employment for casual workers and a wage increase to R5000 (US \$380) a month from R3800 (US \$270). In February, after widespread action to demand casual workers be put on the books, the university promised to accede to the demands but then reneged. Talks last Friday ended in failure and the strike continues.

South African waste disposal workers sent back to work with no agreement

South African garbage disposal workers in Nelson Mandela Bay were instructed to return to work by the South Africa Municipal Workers Union, (SAMWU), which has refused to divulge what agreement it reached with the employer.

The workers walked out over long overtime without payment, unacceptable working conditions, and to demand the removal of the boss of the waste management firm employing them. Workers say the manager continuously ignores their grievances.

Sewage workers in South Africa strike over pay and conditions

A strike by South African sewage workers in the Manguang Metro Municipality area has entered its third week. At issue are grievances over payment of April's salaries to casual workers, a wage increase and the retrieval of a 2011 pay award.

Besides demanding casual workers be brought onto the books, in compliance with South African law, the workers, who are members of the South African Municipal Workers Union, want wage improvements and a one-time payment of R40,000 (US \$3050). Managers have received such a bonus but the 4,000 workers have been left out.

Bloemfontein, Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu services remain paralysed and are being monitored by Bloemfontein's Public Order Police. POP was created in 2014 as a crowd control unit of the South African Police Service in recognition of increased industrial action particularly among municipal workers.

South African parliamentary staff to pay the price for budget cut

South African parliamentary workers are demanding a 10.4 percent pay increase. Parliamentary negotiators are claiming the budget for the staff has been reduced from last year by approximately R102 million (US\$7,781,340). According to the media, the negotiators will be offering no increase in pay and possible redundancies.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) is threatening that if a deal cannot be agreed it may launch industrial action. A strike in 2015, which was met by violent police assaults, saw parliamentary workers' bonuses undermined by a NEHAWU sell out. The union accepted parliament's insistence that its budget dictated the terms and conditions of workers.

Nigerian teachers and state workers strike

Industrial action in Nasawara State Nigeria is being extended as members of the Nigeria Union of Teachers, Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees, and the Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria have gone on strike. A central issue in the strike is the backlog of unpaid wages. Members of other unions are expected to follow suit in the coming days.

The strike is backed by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

In another dispute, Cross River State workers are striking to oppose the implementation of promotions, an end to illegal deductions from workers' wages and payment of pensions in full. The NLC is advising all state employed workers to stay at home until further notice.

Nigerian council workers strike to demand payment of back wages

Council workers are striking in the oil hub city of Warri in Delta State, Nigeria. Workers took to the streets to protest going a year without receiving any wages. The demonstration follows similar action taken by council workers in the adjoining town of Effurun just two weeks ago.

A member of the National Union of Local Government Employees told the *Nigerian Guardian* that the local government does not concern itself with the plight of its employees. He said many workers could no longer cater for their families or send their children to school because they no longer receive salaries.

Nigerian hospital union ends strike

Nigerian workers at Enugu's National Orthopaedic Hospital were sent back to work Tuesday by the Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions without their demands being met. Health workers, barring doctors, went out on strike to demand payment of full wages and missed wages.

Workers were not paid in October and they have only been given half wages since the beginning of the year. A more long-standing complaint is over CONTISS, a pay framework, agreed many years ago, which has not been instituted. The Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions have so far not revealed why the strike was ended, only referring to a "successful meeting" with management.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact