

## Spanish dockers strike in opposition to deregulation

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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### Spanish dockers strike continues

Spanish dockers at the ports of Algeciras, Valencia, Bilbao, Seville and Santander continued their strikes this week over deregulation.

They held a 48-hour strike beginning 8am on Wednesday, working alternate hours and stopping work one hour out of every two.

The CETM union called the series of strikes after talks with the port employers' body, Enesco, broke down. The Popular Party government at the behest of the European Union is forcing through the abolition of the SAGEPS dock labour scheme, which afforded dockers a degree of job security and relatively better wages.

Further strikes are planned for June 19, 21 and 23 next week.

The union called off previous planned strikes and the current strikes were only called over disagreements over the number of jobs to be cut and the amount in wage reductions to be implemented.

### UK car workers reject union agreed deal on pensions

UK car workers employed by German car manufacturer BMW at its four UK sites have rejected a deal negotiated by the Unite union.

The workers are opposing the company's plans to move all employees onto an inferior defined contribution pension scheme. Unite had already agreed new starters from 2014 would be on this inferior scheme.

The union suspended strike action after the company came up with another offer, which the workforce has now rejected. Under the new offer, described by BMW as its final offer, the move to the inferior pension scheme would go ahead but with a £22,000 one-off payment to staff paid over three years or a £25,000 payment into the defined contribution pension scheme.

Speaking to the *Oxford Times*, a worker at the Cowley plant said some workers had felt intimidated by BMW's insistence that the deal offered was final and had voted in favour. The same worker told the paper: "BMW has always, in the last 16 to 17 years, had what they wanted and they have done very well with the Mini [car model]."

In response to the rejection of their sellout terms, Unite has threatened further strikes in an effort to diffuse workers' anger.

### Strike threat by Hungarian public service workers

Public service workers in Hungary are threatening to strike over low pay. According to the Hungarian Public Servants and Public Service, around a third of approximately 600,000 public service workers have not received a pay rise for the last 8-10 years.

The union said they would call a strike for July 17 if current talks with the government are not successful.

### Latvian family doctors announce strike date

Latvian GPs have announced they will begin an indefinite strike on July 3, offering only emergency cover. They are aggrieved over the Health Ministry's failure to set up a panel to discuss the GPs' concerns over pay and the reorganization of the service, which would include them performing extra duties.

Around 60 percent of the nearly 1,200 medics that belong to the Latvian Association of Family Physicians voted in favour of the action. The head of the association described the Latvian health care system as being on the point of collapse.

### Strike and protest by Italian fashion retail staff

Staff working for Swedish fashion chain H&M struck on June 10 and protested outside its flagship store in Milan. It was organised by the UILTuCS Lombardia trade union to protest H&M's plans to close four stores in Italy with the loss of 89 jobs.

### Health staff in Luxembourg set to strike

Health sector workers in Luxembourg are set to strike June 19 to push for a pay increase and in opposition to proposed changes to working conditions.

The members of the OGBL trade union are seeking a pay increase and better career prospects in line with other public sector staff. They are opposed to any pay and career improvement that would be paid for by attacks on working conditions, such as shorter breaks, no carrying over of leave entitlement and restrictions on overtime terms.

## **Strike of Norwegian oil workers averted**

A proposed strike that would have hit five Norwegian oil fields has been scotched. Ledeme, the trade union covering oil and gas workers reached a deal with the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association on June 10 over pay. The five targeted fields are operated by Statoil, Shell and Eni.

## **London underground rail staff ballot**

London underground staff on the Piccadilly Line and Tube Lines workshop staff are being balloted over a casualization threat.

Tube Lines plans to hire 35 staff to carry out necessary maintenance work on the Piccadilly Line rolling stock on a fixed term basis. The workers fear it could lead to a wider casualization of the workforce.

The result of the ballot by the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union will be announced July 4.

## **UK job centre staff strike**

Around 50 staff at the Eastern Avenue Jobcentre in the city of Sheffield, South Yorkshire have been on strike all week against plans to close the facility. The members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) have mounted a picket line each day.

The closure is part of plans to close 78 out of the 714 jobcentres nationwide along with other back office facilities.

## **Strike by UK airline crew suspended**

The Unite union called off a four-day strike by 2,900 British Airways (BA) cabin crew that was due to begin today.

They work for BA's "mixed fleet"—as part of a two-tiered workforce—and are employed on a contract agreed with the Unite union that offers inferior pay and conditions compared to other BA staff.

The strike was called after BA refused to restore concessionary flights to staff who had taken part in the previous 26 days of strike action, called to protest their poverty pay rates.

Unite has agreed to attend talks under the auspices of the Acas government reconciliation service.

## **Israeli oil refinery workers end strike**

Israeli oil refinery workers at Paz Oil returned to work Monday after a one-day walkout. They returned to work after the company and workers' representatives agreed a new collective work contract covering the next five years.

## **Libyan oil workers end strike**

Oil workers at the Sharara oil field in southwest Libya returned to work after a short strike last week.

They struck following the death of a work colleague in a swimming pool accident. The workers protested the lack of medical emergency facilities that might have saved him. They returned to work after the company promised to upgrade its emergency medical equipment and procedures.

## **South African municipal workers strike enters third week**

Services provided by 4,000 South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) members in the Mangaung municipality continue to be withdrawn, as the strike enters its fourth week.

Workers are demanding that salary increases, in line with "Metro status" established in 2011, be paid to them in line with managerial staff. They also demand back pay for the shortfall of six years of arrears.

They are demanding that 120 workers reduced to casual status earlier this year be brought back into direct employment and that moves to further privatization be halted.

On June 9, the ruling African National Congress council was awarded a court interdict ruling the strike illegal. A SAMWU spokesman said he was not sure whether workers would return to work in line with the court order.

Until Monday, striking workers, surrounded by armed police, had camped outside the Free State parliament.

As reports of the stench and sewage spillage on the streets pervade the news, the main concern of the Mangaung council is providing facilities for individuals and businesses to pay their bills. They expressed concern that payment centres, like the Bram Fischer building and other municipal buildings, around the Metro area, with striking workers protesting outside them, were inaccessible.

## **Call centre operatives strike for parity in South Africa**

Emergency call operators in South Africa are involved in a dispute over pay. Members of the newly formed South African Federation of Trade Unions who work the national emergency 10111 hotline are demanding parity of pay with government call operators.

In 2016, a wage evaluation exercise recommended that 10111 operators pay be raised to level 7, but this was not implemented.

Members of the South African Policing Union are being mobilised in an attempt to break the strike.

## **South African mortuary staff strike over pay, and protective clothing**

Mortuary staff at Pinetown Mortuary in Durban, South Africa are demanding their manager be removed. Around 20 workers have been sacked after refusing to return to work when an interdict was issued designating their jobs as essential services.

Workers claim the manager is serving as a block to raising grievances at a higher level.

The complaints consist of overtime not being signed off, having to buy their own safety equipment such as boots, staff having to put in requests for gloves, and face masks being reused because no replacements are

available. They are also protesting reduced staffing levels and an increased workload.

### **Kenyan nurses union continues strike**

Nurses are continuing their long running on-off strike demanding the implementation of the 2016 collective bargaining agreement (CBA). This follows previous strikes over its unimplemented 2013 predecessor. Union members resumed their strike last week.

Angry nurses marched on the Council of Governors offices in Nairobi this week, but there was no one to receive their petition. They also petitioned the Ministry of Health and the Salaries and Remunerations Committee.

Kenya's Council of Governors has ignored arranged meetings with the nurses union, the Kenyan National Union of Nurses (KNUN).

The government is reneging on the 2016 contract just as they did on the 2013 contract. The Salaries and Remunerations Committee underlined this position by throwing out the CBA, saying the cost involved is unreasonable.

### **Nigerian state illegally imposes no-work no-pay dictum**

A strike by municipal workers in Nasarawa State Nigeria is continuing with several unions involved. A central issue in the strike is the backlog of unpaid wages.

Members of the Nigeria Union of Teachers, Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees and Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria are involved in the walkout.

Nasarawa State government is claiming the right to impose a no-work no-pay rule on the striking workers. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) secretary says the state governor has no legal right to stop the payment of wages while workers are on strike.

Workers have to be away from their jobs without permission to have their wages stopped, the NLC insists. Pay is not affected while carrying out a legal strike. The Nigerian Labour Congress bureaucracy is split over the strike.



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