

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

## Kenyan nurses in 13th week of strike

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### Kenyan nurses into their 13th week on strike

The Kenyan nurses' strike, over 13 weeks long, is continuing under further provocations, as county governors are threatening to sack them if they don't return to work.

Describing the strike as illegal, backed up by a court last Friday, the governors threatened to fire the 25,000 nurses if they are not back at work this Friday. The decision, arrived at the first governors meeting after the election, described the walkout as illegal.

The court appointed John Bii, the previous Kenyan National Union of Nurses chairman (KNUN), as union negotiator, as he was not involved in the original strike call last November and has demanded an end to the strike.

The *Daily Nation* quoted the governor on August 31, saying he would be prepared to hire a new cohort of nurses if they disobey the directive to return to work.

### Kenyan clinical officers strike over unpaid and downgraded salaries

The Kenyan Union of Clinical Officers (KUCO) are to go on strike on September 15 if they are not paid their outstanding salaries, and their appeal over their salary review is not answered.

The clinical officers have not been paid for the last two months without any reason given.

A Salary Review Commission (SRC), rather than resolve an outstanding grievance over allowances, deemed clinical officers unskilled labour and downgraded their salary scale.

Nurses suffered a similar reduction exercise by the SRC.

KUCO had previously called a strike, then postponed it on the basis that the SRC would look again at their evaluation of the clinical officers' pay. The SRC did not respond to their appeal for a salary review, neither have they paid the outstanding wages.

A KUCO official accused the government of not wanting to resolve the nurses' 13-week strike, saying that "it does not care about the plight of the workers and patients who are expecting to receive services at the state-run health facilities."

### 15,000 Kenyan public sector threatened with sack if they support strike call

The Kenyan, Nairobi County governor has threatened to sack public sector workers if they heed the union's strike call.

The Kenyan Government Workers Union (KGWU) issued a strike notice for Wednesday this week, in response to their August wages going unpaid.

Nairobi owes its workers Sh18 billion (US\$170 million) outstanding wages and statutory deductions.

The county governor threatened that any of the 15,000 workers responding to the strike call would be sacked and in an attempt to intimidate them stressed that there are a million jobless in the state ready and able to take their positions.

The governor claims the strike is illegal because the union did not present the workers' grievances to the devolved unit (county government) properly.

### Nigerian doctors strike over outstanding wages and promotions

Nigerian doctors belonging to the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) have come out on strike over owed wages and lack of promotion. Locums, military personnel and police using Federal Road Safety health facilities have been drafted in to cover the doctors' work.

Young doctors on internships are being pressured not to join the strike, with threats of having to take their training again.

On Wednesday, NARD, the Nigerian Medical Association and the Federal Government met to try to resolve the dispute.

### Nigerian polytechnic staff strike over unpaid wages and worsening conditions

Polytechnic staff in Ondo State Nigeria have come out on an indefinite strike over 10 months of unpaid wages and the long overdue implementation of a 16-month-old pay structure, CONPOCASS.

The chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) complained that unpaid wages have cost his members around N2.1 billion (US\$5.6 million) in lost income.

Staff members are also facing a re-evaluation of their jobs in which they

expect to be downgraded. The chairman bemoaned the conditions in the university, giving an example of students unable to sit down as there are no chairs in the lecture rooms.

ASUP has joined the ASUU union who are also out on strike on a joint programme of “bringing sanity to the universities,” where staff are suffering similar privations.

### **Nigerian unions accept state workers’ wages reduced by half**

Nigerian Kogi State workers have rejected the state governor’s proposal to only pay 50 percent of July’s salaries.

The workers union, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), said it was surprised at the offer as the state recently had a second bailout fund from the Paris Club of donors and its monthly financial injection from the federal government.

The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) also rejected the same offer, although they were not invited to the meeting to discuss it. The medical union said its members were disappointed to hear they were only getting 50 percent of their wages.

However, the news web site punchng.com reported on September 1 that at a meeting between labour leaders and the state government it was agreed workers would only be paid 50 percent of their July salaries.

### **UK McDonald’s workers strike for first time**

Workers at two branches of fast food giant McDonald’s in Britain walked out on strike on Monday to demand a £10 an hour minimum wage and an end to zero hour contracts. The one-day strike was organised by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU).

The strike was the first such action against McDonald’s UK operations. The two affected restaurants were in Cambridge and Crayford in London, with around 40 workers involved.

McDonald’s has 115,000 staff at 1,249 restaurants and, as with workers employed at other fast food conglomerates, has been able to employ its mainly young workforce staff on inferior, minimum wage contracts for years. That this situation exists in the first place is an indictment of the trade unions.

Early morning picket lines were set up at both restaurants before the workers left to attend a rally outside Parliament beginning at midday. The protest was addressed by Labour Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and BFAWU leader Ronnie Draper.

Unions in the United States have organized similar token actions, aimed not at improving the horrible conditions faced by fast food workers, but at getting their foot in the door so they can collect dues from these highly exploited workers.

### **UK civil servants union to ballot members over pay cap**

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is to conduct an indicative ballot of its 200,000 members over opposition to the Conservative government’s 1 percent public sector pay cap.

PCS members are demanding a 5 percent increase. The ballot will take place between October 9 and November 6. The union said if the first

ballot gives an affirmative result, a second ballot will take place over specific strike action.

### **Canteen staff at UK oil refinery strike over low pay**

Eighteen canteen staff working at the Fawley oil refinery in Hampshire have held a series of one-day strikes. The first one was on August 25, with the latest one taking place Monday of this week.

The Unite union members are employed by leading hospitality provider, Baxterstorey, and are fighting for a 1.5 percent pay rise, as they are currently only paid between £7.50 to £8 an hour. It is reported the company is paying scabs £8.01 an hour.

### **Greek asylum services workers hold two-day strike**

Staff working to provide asylum services to refugees in Greece began a two-day strike on Wednesday. They were protesting months-long delays in receiving their pay. They are employed on short-term contracts to provide help and support to the many refugees who have ended up in Greece.

A protest by the workers was planned for Thursday in the Greek capital, Athens.

### **Strike by Greek metro workers called off**

On Monday, a strike planned by metro workers in Athens for Thursday was called off. The action was to protest the Syriza government’s plans to impose retroactive higher social security contributions for the years 2001 to 2011.

Union officials met with Labour Ministry representatives on Tuesday to discuss the matter, but the results of the meeting to date have not been announced.

### **Strike by bus drivers in Slovenia**

Bus drivers in Slovenia, employed by the UK-based multinational transport company Arriva, came out on a nationwide strike on Monday. Among their demands are a pay increase, improved conditions, additional pension benefits and adherence to safety regulations by the company.

Arriva is one of the country’s largest bus operators.

### **Strike threat by Czech teachers**

On Monday, CTK, the union representing Czech teachers and school support staff, gave notice of strike action. The union is calling for a 15 percent pay rise for teachers and a 10 percent rise for non-teaching support staff.

The coalition government, while agreeing in principle that teaching staff pay should be raised, have failed to agree by how much and when. Other education staff unions may join the proposed strike of CTK members.

### **Hungarian Tesco staff to strike**

On Monday, unions representing Hungarian staff employed by supermarket giant Tesco announced a national strike. Tesco staff are seeking a 25 percent pay increase and are also protesting proposals by the company to lay off staff.

The union so far has not announced the date of the strike. Union representatives met with Tesco management on Wednesday, with the outcome not made public.

### **Dutch primary teachers announce strike**

Unions representing Dutch primary school teachers have announced a one-day strike for October 5. The teachers are seeking pay increases to bring them in line with secondary school teachers.

### **Strike threat by Scandinavian airlines pilots**

Three unions representing pilots working for the SAS airline in Denmark and Norway may strike later this month. They are opposed to SAS's plans to take on new pilots based in England and Spain with lower wages and benefits than those currently paid to SAS pilots.

Unions are currently in negotiations with SAS management, but have a mandate to strike from September 11 if no progress is made.

### **Georgian rail workers end hunger strike**

Georgian rail workers ended their hunger strike on September 1. Initially two rail workers from Gurjaani in the east of the country began the hunger strike after their employer, Georgian Railway, told them they would be relocated to a different workplace but with no reimbursement of travel costs. Other workers and supporters later joined the hunger strike.

They tried to set up a tent outside the headquarters of the railway company in Tbilisi to continue their protest, but were prevented from doing so by police. Ten of the hunger strikers and supporters were then arrested by the police on August 24, but later released. A court hearing being held today will determine if they should be fined.



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