

University staff strike across Nigeria as health care and state media workers consider action

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

15 September 2017

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Nigerian university staff resume action

University staff across Nigeria came out on strike on Monday under the joint leadership of the Joint Action Committee (JAC), which comprises the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities and the National Association of Academic Technologists.

They are resuming a strike first called in January over a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the government but since ignored. The MoU was based on increased funding for universities and improved conditions for the staff.

A JAC spokesman said there would be no skeletal staff or concessions until the union agrees.

Their action comes as resident doctors continue a walkout that began September 4 and other Nigerian health care workers consider nationwide action (see below). Nigerian state media employees are also threatening to strike while civil servants continue a walkout in Zamfara State.

The other academic unions are supporting Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members who have been out on strike for three weeks. The ASUU held a 14-hour meeting with the government on September 7.

When leaving the meeting, ASUU refused to say when it will be convening to consider any offer made by the Ministry of Labour or when it would be put to members.

While the meeting with the government was taking place, Lagos University Governing Council sacked 15 ASUU members including the chairman and the vice chairman of the union.

Nigerian health care providers threaten strike

As with the university unions, more health sector unions are coming into conflict with the Nigerian government. The Nigerian Assembly of Health Professionals and the Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) have served the government with a grovelling letter, seeking its “intervention so as to avert indefinite industrial action in the health industry.”

A spokesman for the union said, “JOHESU is aware of your [the government’s] recent laudable role in intervening and resolving the issues of the medical doctors while they were on strike”, and asked that it “accept the assurances of our best wishes.”

JOHESU represents 95 percent of health care workers and providers. As the letter makes clear, its demands are timid, asking for the federal government to agree to a “revamp” of the tertiary health sector infrastructure by the end of this month.

The unions are aware they are sitting on a powder keg. The National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) has been on an indefinite national strike since September 4. It is threatened with being made illegal as the Ministry of Health claims that once negotiations have started, employees cannot embark on a strike against their employers.

The government is also in the process of recruiting “casual” doctors to take NARD members’ places in hospitals.

Rather than unite with resident doctors, JOHESU national secretary, Ayinde Obisesan, criticised the government for giving precedence to them.

Nigerian state media staff in dispute

The Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services, and the Radio, Television and Theatre Art Workers Union have given notice to strike at the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

The three unions organised in the news agency have given a 21-day declaration to strike concluding on September 25 unless NAN recognises draft Conditions of Service at the agency.

Another component of their demands is the payment of relocation fees to 20 employees previously made redundant, then re-employed and deployed to Abuja and Lagos.

Civil servants strike in Zamfara State, Nigeria

Civil servants are out on strike in Nigeria’s Zamfara State demanding the payment of salaries, pensions and wage increases. According to the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), 1,400 workers recruited two years ago have not been paid any wages.

The strike had been called by the NLC for September 12 after a 21-day warning strike, on the demand of “improving workers welfare and the development of the state.”

Among other issues behind the strike is the failure to pay primary school teachers and local government workers the minimum wage.

Kenyan university staff threaten to renew action

Kenyan university lecturers have threatened to return to the picket line if their 2013-17 collective bargaining agreement is not implemented by the end of the month.

The government claims it has released Ks10bn (\$97 million) but the universities say they have not received the funds to implement the new salary structure. University staff have not had a pay increase since 2010.

Kenyan nurses dispute passes 100 days

Along with university staff, Kenyan nurses are continuing their strike, now beyond 100 days (the duration of the doctor's strike), and are hardening their attitude to their un-implemented collective bargaining agreement.

Some 25,000 are defying the threat to their jobs after the council of governors' chief executive instructed state governors to run advertisements recruiting nurses to replace the existing striking staff.

Strike by UK airline pilots

Pilots working for the UK tour operator Thomas Cook staged a 12-hour strike on September 8. It was the first by UK airline pilots since 1974.

The pilots, who are members of the British Airline Pilots Association (Balpa), had rejected a pay increase offer of four percent over two years plus an average 1.8 percent. A Balpa spokesman said they wanted a minimum 3.2 percent annual pay rise in line with inflation.

Thomas Cook is due to hold talks with the union under the auspices of the government reconciliation service Acas by the end of next week. Balpa has given notice of a further three days of strikes, September 23 and 29 and October 6.

More UK rail staff vote against driver operated only trains

Rail staff working for rail company Greater Anglia, members of the Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT), voted by a 90 percent margin to take strike action against the expansion of driver only operated (DOO) trains by the company, which would result in the loss of train guard jobs.

No date as yet has been set by the RMT for the strike.

London bus drivers protest

Bus drivers in London, members of the Unite union, protested on Thursday outside City Hall over the failure of bus companies within the capital to treat their staff decently. They called on Transport for London to adopt a “Bill of Rights” including a safe work schedule without forced overtime and the right to a proper rest break during the working day.

UK nuclear plant staff balloted for action

The 2,000 staff working for Sellafield Ltd, at the nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria in northern England have begun receiving ballot papers.

The ballot, involving the Unite union, closes October 2. The members are being balloted for strike action after they rejected a company-imposed 1.5 percent pay rise backdated to April. This follows a 0.25 percent pay rise last year. With inflation pushing three percent, acceptance of the offer would mean a further real term pay cut.

Belgian public service unions announce day of action

The Belgian public sector union federation, CGSP/ACOD, has announced a day of action for October 10 to oppose the government's public services policy. The strike is likely to impact railway and postal services.

Other public sector workers such as the fire service, municipal staff and hospital employees are being urged to support the action.

Rally by Czech public sector workers

Public sector unions representing teachers and other public sector staff held a rally on Thursday to demand the Czech government raise teachers' pay by 15 percent and those of other public sector staff by 10 percent.

They are calling for the pay rise to be agreed before the October parliamentary elections. The unions have said they will call a nationwide strike if their demands are not met.

Sick-in by German airline pilots

Large numbers of pilots working for Air Berlin held a sick-in on Tuesday forcing the company to cancel around 100 flights. Around 250 pilots out of a workforce of 1,500 took part in the action.

On Wednesday, pilots again rang in sick, leading to the cancellation of around 30 flights.

The unofficial action was to protest possible redundancies by the airline. Air Berlin has declared bankruptcy and is up for sale with the deadline for takeover bids this week.

Strike by Hungarian Tesco staff closes stores

Around 12 percent of the 206 Tesco supermarket stores in Hungary were shut on September 9 due to a second day of strikes by staff.

The retail workers are seeking a 25 percent pay rise and for staff numbers to be increased by around 15 percent to overcome staff shortages. Unions representing Tesco staff were due to meet with management at the beginning of the week for talks over the issue.

Spanish rail staff to walk out

Spanish rail staff, members of the CCOO union, have announced they will hold a nationwide 11-hour strike on Friday, September 29.

The workers are demanding a pay increase and for additional staff to be employed. The CCOO estimates that around 6,000 jobs have been lost over the recent period.

Strike by Portuguese nurses

Nurses in Portugal began a five-day strike on Monday. According to press reports, around 85 percent of nurses are taking part in the strike, which was called by the Independent Union of Nursing Professionals and the Nurses' Union.

The staff are seeking a pay increase, a 35-hour maximum week as well as the creation of a rank of specialist nurse on a higher pay grade. There is a shortage of around 30,000 nurses in the Portuguese health system.

Iranian union members pledge action to free jailed activist

Members of the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company agreed last week to carry out industrial action in support of imprisoned union leader Reza Shahabi. He is being held on political charges and had been due for release in August. However, his prison sentence term has been extended until December 2018. Among the forms of action being considered is a one-hour strike by the bus drivers.



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