

Israeli workers protest job cuts

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

29 December 2017

## Amazon workers in Italy conduct overtime ban

Following a strike in November on Black Friday—one of the busiest shopping days of the year—500 workers at Amazon’s main logistics hub in Italy continue to oppose low pay and bad working conditions.

On December 20, workers at Amazon’s Castel San Giovanni plant near Piacenza began an overtime ban and reduced their working shift time by two hours. A series of protest meetings were held throughout the day.

The FILCAMS CGIL union, however, limited the strike to workers on permanent contracts and urged temporary workers to continue to work, undermining the solidarity of workers and the impact of the action.

## UK rail staff take industrial action over holiday period

Rail strikes have taken place over the Christmas holiday period, with more scheduled. Arriva Cross Country workers struck Wednesday with a further strike due December 31. The strikes by train managers and senior conductors were organized by the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union and are part of an ongoing series of stoppages in a dispute over rostering and Sunday working.

RMT guards employed by private franchise Greater Anglia in eastern England held a 24-hour strike Wednesday as part of the ongoing dispute over plans to expand Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains.

Workers who provide cleaning, security and information services on the London Docklands Light Railway are due to strike on New Year’s Eve. The RMT members are protesting outsourcing company ISS’s refusal to enter into serious talks over low pay and other issues. Rail guards at several private rail companies are due to hold strikes in the New Year over the extending use of DOO trains.

## Journalists in Darlington, northern England vote to strike

Journalists employed by the Newsquest organisation in Darlington voted by nearly 90 percent to walk out. The 28 members of the

National Union of Journalists work for various titles produced by Newsquest in the area, including the *Durham Times* and the *Northern Echo*.

The US owned Newsquest is pushing through job cuts and attacks on pay and conditions. Sixteen Journalists in Swindon working for another Newsquest title, the *Swindon Advertiser*, are set to walk out January 2-3 over the same issues.

## Limited strike by German Ryanair pilots

A four-hour strike by pilots working for the German wing of the Dublin-based Ryanair budget airline took place on December 22, while other proposed strikes at Ryanair bases across Europe, including Ireland and Italy, were called off at the last minute.

Ryanair boss Michael O’Leary reversed the company’s 32-year-old policy of refusing to recognise trade unions. However, the Cockpit Union (VC) representing German Ryanair pilots went ahead with a four-hour strike claiming it was to serve as a warning, after initial talks with Ryanair had broken down.

According to VC, Ryanair objected to two members of the union’s five-member negotiating team. The company is scheduled to meet with VC again in January. Ryanair claimed the stoppage led to delays but no cancellations.

## Spanish airport catering workers strike

Catering staff at the Spanish airports of Barcelona, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Malaga held two-hour stoppages on December 22 and 23. Similar stoppages are planned for today and Saturday. The partial strikes hit bars, cafés and restaurants at the airports.

The members of the CCOO and UGT unions are protesting plans by airport managing company, Aena, to increase the rents paid by catering concessions and also the dividing up of concessions. They fear this will put pressure on catering companies to cut salaries.

## Israeli workers protest Teva job cuts

After a half-day general strike on December 17, which disrupted business throughout Israel, workers at Teva are continuing their protests against the multi-national pharmaceutical giant's plans to cut of 1,700 Israeli jobs as part of its 14,000 job cuts worldwide.

Workers have blocked light rail trains in Jerusalem and clashed with police, barricaded themselves inside one of the two plants threatened with closing, and conducted other actions against the world's largest generic drug manufacturers and one of the largest employers in Israel. The Histadrut labor federation, however, has promoted nationalism and appealed to the reactionary Netanyahu administration to stop the layoffs.

### **Israeli teachers strike ruled illegal by court**

A planned strike by Israeli teachers at kindergartens, elementary and junior high schools, planned for Wednesday, December 27, was blocked by a Tel Aviv labour court. The court granted the Education Ministry an injunction forbidding the strike, which was called by the Israeli Teachers' Union, on the scurrilous grounds that it was called too hastily.

The dispute is over teachers being marked as taking 1.4 days sick leave for each actual day off. This has been taking place secretly for 30 years.

### **Tunisian protesters tear-gassed by police**

A recent protest in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid was attacked by police with tear gas. The protest, which marked the sixth anniversary of the downfall of the dictator, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, highlighted ongoing unemployment and precarious employment opportunities of thousands of Tunisians.

This year has seen 49 suicides or attempted suicides of workers desperate over their lack of job opportunities in Sidi Bouzid. In 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor in the city, committed suicide when he burnt himself to death in protest at ill treatment by authorities and lack of opportunities. His death sparked the demonstrations resulting in Ben Ali's ousting.

### **South African shop workers' one-day strike**

Around 30,000 retail staff working for Shoprite Checkers in South Africa held a one-day strike on December 22. The company is the largest food retailer in Africa.

Workers are demanding the reversal of changes to working hours, safe working conditions, guaranteed minimum hours of work for part-time staff and the reinstatement of Shoprite staff previously sacked for protesting changes to working hours.

The strikers are members of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers union.

### **Nigerian state government workers begin indefinite strike**

Thousands of Osun state government employees in Nigeria began an indefinite strike on Wednesday to protest unpaid wages, lack of promotion and pension issues. The strike was called by the Nigerian Labour Congress.

### **Nigerian polytechnic staff continue strike**

Over 2,000 staff at six polytechnic schools in Oyo state are continuing their strike, which started in November. The strikers include academic and non-academic staff at the six polytechnics, including the Oke-Ogun Polytechnic. They say they are owed up to 16 months' pay.

A communiqué issued by the academic staff union at Oke-Ogun Polytechnic said while other Oyo state workers had received their full Christmas salaries, the staff at the six polytechnics had only received 25 percent.

### **Kenyan airline disregards court order to reinstate sacked employees**

Kenya Airways (KQ) has ignored a court order to reinstate 157 staff on its engineering division who were sacked for taking part in previous strike action against the terms of their contract and poor working conditions.

The court ruled on December 18 that the sacked employees immediately be reinstated. However, KQ put them on 30-day leaves on December 18 while management claimed it was reorganizing shift rotas.



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