

Nigerian teachers strike to defend colleagues' jobs

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Nigerian teachers strike to defend colleagues' jobs

Teachers went on strike in Kaduna state Nigeria Monday in defence of 21,780 fellow teachers threatened with the sack. The state is using a bogus competency test to reduce its teaching staff in primary and secondary schools.

Teachers are responding to the defence of their colleagues, even though they are themselves being threatened with dismissal for striking.

Many schools throughout the state were closed. Teachers at some schools, where teachers had reported to work, complained that the National Union of Teacher had not called on them to strike. In the face of state government monitoring of schools seeking to finger striking teachers, other teachers were reluctant to go out on a limb without official sanction.

A spokesman for teachers still at work, as reported by *This Day* online news, said, "We are waiting for a formal communication and we will definitely comply if we received the circular."

A National Labour Congress spokesman has accused the state governor of carrying out the sackings to appease the World Bank in order to qualify for a loan.

Nigerian university teaching hospital staff oppose job destruction

A workforce reduction process is taking place at Nigeria's Ladoko Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) teaching hospital.

Staff at the jointly owned teaching hospital are either being sacked or dispersed into the civil service, a move the chairman of Association of Resident Doctors says is against the ethics of the profession.

256 of the hospital staff are being sacked and 300 are to be redeployed into other public-sector jobs. Redeployment is, the resident doctor's chairman says, a euphemism for the further loss of jobs. He accused the state of behaving like a military regime.

Workers at the hospital have carried out on-off strikes over the last year over part payment of wages and 12 months of outstanding wages, among other issues. Resident doctors and other staff were already out on strike and were summoned to protest the latest memorandum on the destruction of jobs announced December 27.

Nigeria's Abadan polytechnic staff out on strike over partially paid and owed wages

A strike is taking place at Abadan Polytechnic in Nigeria.

Despite management declaring its end on Monday, the entrance remained padlocked. A spokesman of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) organising the strike over the last nine weeks said its service are still withdrawn.

The strike involving academic and non-academic staff is affecting six state tertiary institutions owned by Oyo state. Six unions under the umbrella of JAC are striking for the resumption of wages paid at 100 percent and previously owed wages paid.

Swaziland building society workers strike called off

A Swaziland building society workers' strike planned for January 15 has been called off by the Labour Court.

The strike was declared over a bonus payment of five percent, agreed in May following an arbitration settlement at the Labour Court and reduced to one percent by the Swaziland Building Society.

The industrial court postponed further action until January 23.

South African steel workers continue strike over minimum wage and union recognition

South African steel workers employed at the AGNI Steel SA are to continue their month-long strike.

The strike is being carried out by the majority union at the steel mill, the Liberated Metalworkers Union of South Africa (LIMUSA), over union recognition and failure to pay the minimum wage.

LIMUSA claims 140 members out of a workforce of 270 employees. By contrast the union that the company reached an agreement with, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), has only 13 members.

The agreement is based on industry-wide negotiations between the metal industry employers and the overall industry majority union, NUMSA.

Rival union LIMUSA claims NUMSA has negotiated a deal reducing the minimum wage below the legal limit of R40 per hour around (US \$3.20) to between R24 (US \$1.92) and R31 (US \$2.48).

AGNI has retaliated against the strike with a lockout and by seeking to employ replacements for LIMUSA members. The dispute has been taken to Port Elizabeth High Court where the union picketed last week.

South African refuse workers strike to demand permanent employment

South African refuse collectors took to Durban streets Monday to launch a strike and protest in support of their demand for full time jobs. Durban's municipality management commanded that the strikers return to work or they would be sacked on Tuesday, an edict which they ignored.

The strikers, employed on South Africa's Expanded Public Works Program that sets to work unemployed workers, protested on the streets until they were kettled by the police.

Unemployment in South Africa last June was 27.7 percent, around 6.2 million.

Italian teachers strike

Around 20,000 infant and junior teachers held a one-day strike on Monday. They were protesting changes made to rules for hiring teachers—teachers with only a training college diploma as opposed to university degrees, will no longer be awarded permanent posts.

Strikers protested outside the Ministry of Education buildings in Rome and held regional rallies in other cities including Milan, Bologna and Turin.

Malaga, Spain firefighters in year-long strike

Three hundred firefighters in the Spanish Costa del Sol city of Malaga are now entering the second year of their strike over working conditions, which despite several rounds of negotiations is no nearer to being resolved. Some of the firefighters have been referred to court for not maintaining the "minimum services" conditions of the strike.

Greek protests against austerity and strike restrictions

Around 500 gathered outside the Labour Ministry building in Athens on Tuesday to protest moves by the Syriza-led government to restrict the right to strike, in line with demands of international creditors.

On Wednesday further protests took place in Athens outside the official residence of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras over the Syriza-led government's ongoing austerity measures. A new austerity bill is due to be voted on next week that will impose further benefit cuts as well as restricting the right to strike.

The protests were organised by the Stalinist controlled PAME trade union. Later in the day protests took place outside law courts against the online auctions of properties seized because of mortgage default.

Greek ferry staff strike

Greek ferry workers are holding a 24-hour strike today to oppose pension cuts, job losses and use of uninsured labour imposed by the Syriza-led government. The ferry workers are members of the Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Federation. The action led to all ferries being tied up for the day.

Strike plan by Portuguese VW workers

Around 3,000 shop floor workers at the Volkswagen Autoeuropa plant at Palmela near Lisbon are set to strike February 2 and 3 in opposition to compulsory Saturday working between February and July.

The plant, which produces the new VW T-Roc model, is the country's second largest exporter. Workers at the plant held a 24-hour strike in August last year, the first such action in the plant's 25-year history.

UK rail construction workers one-day strike

Eighty electricians working on the Crossrail project building a new rail line across London held a 24-hour strike Wednesday. They work on the southeastern (Woolwich site) section of the line, known as the Elizabeth line, running between Whitechapel and Abbey Wood. They are employed by Balfour Beatty, the British-based multinational construction firm.

In early December around 50 electricians at the Woolwich site were laid off in the run up to Christmas after they had demanded a £5,000 finishing bonus. The dismissed electricians set up an unofficial picket line December 13, which was respected by 150 workers at the site who refused to cross it. Workers at other sites spontaneously walked off in solidarity with the electricians.

Following the unofficial action, the Unite union organised a ballot in which 85 percent of the workers voted to strike. It is the first official strike to take place on the Crossrail project.

Manchester Rusholme bus drivers' strike enters fourth month

The series of strikes by bus drivers working for First Manchester at the Rusholme depot has now entered its fourth month.

Employed by the international company FirstGroup, which owns the largest bus operator in the US, Greyhound, they are seeking pay parity with other First bus drivers in the surrounding area—the pay gap amounts to around £5,000.

Members of the Unite union, they are taking strike action Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays on alternate weeks.

Teachers hold one-day strike at UK London school to oppose academy plans

Around 100 teachers at the Cumberland School in the east London

borough of Newham held a one-day strike Tuesday. They are opposing plans to turn the school into an academy, transferring control from the council to a multi-academy organisation, the Community Schools Trust.

The teachers, members of the National Education Union, mounted a picket line supported by concerned parents.

Firefighters at UK nuclear plant hold one-day strike

Firefighters employed at the Sellafield Nuclear plant in the northwest held a one-day strike Thursday, with a further strike planned for January 22. They have held a series of strikes since the dispute broke out in July last year.

The firefighters, who also have paramedic skills, are seeking a re-evaluation of their pay structure in line with the level of responsibilities and duties they perform. They are members of the GMB union.

UK engineering workers strike over paltry pay offer

Staff at the GNB Industrial Power plant in Bolton, which makes fork lift trucks, held a 24-hour strike Monday in response to a paltry pay offer of 1.5 percent—a cut in real terms. The workforce, members of the Unite union, voted by more than 80 percent to strike. A series of 24 and 48-hour strikes up until the beginning of March have been scheduled to press home their protest.

Strike by Iranian sugar workers

The workforce of the Haft Tapeh sugar cane plantation and mill walked out on strike on Sunday protesting ongoing delayed payment of wages and poor working conditions. They had previously gone on strike in December over the same issues.

The former state-owned sugar mill complex, which was privatized in 2015, has a 1,500 workforce.

Jerusalem municipal workers end strike

Municipal workers in Jerusalem returned to work on Sunday ending their strike, which began on January 4. They had walked out protesting the firing of over 2,000 staff due to inadequate finance to fund the city's services. The brief strike led to rubbish piling up in the city's streets.

The city agreed to rescind the firing after city authorities and Ministry of Finance officials came to an intermittent agreement to make up the financial shortfall.



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