Over 10,000 Slovenian public sector workers strike

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

**26 January 2018**

**Over 10,000 Slovenian public sector workers strike**

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

Europe

**Slovenian public sector workers strike**

Over 10,000 Slovenian public sector workers, including administration, education, fire-fighters, cultural and justice staff held a one-day strike on Wednesday against austerity.

A rally in front of the government headquarters in Ljubljana attracted thousands of workers. They are opposing government measures introduced in 2012 that held down wages and are seeking a pay rise of around 18 percent.

Follow up strikes are proposed, with police unions coming out on February 12, health and care staff on February 13 and teachers on February 14.

**UK university lecturers back strike over pensions**

Lecturers at 61 UK universities have voted by an 88 percent majority on a 58 percent turnout to strike against proposals attacking pensions. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) wants to transform the current defined benefits scheme to a defined contribution one, with the potential for some scheme members to lose around £200,000 in the value of their pension.

The academics agreed to 14 days of strikes beginning with a two-day strike on February 22, followed by a three-day, four-day and five-day escalation. As well as striking, the academics will work strictly to their contracts, refusing voluntary cover. The Universities and College Union said it remains open to discussion with the employers' organisation, Universities UK (UUK), ahead of the industrial action.

**Further strike by fire-fighters at UK nuclear plant**

Around 60 fire-fighters at the Sellafield Nuclear reprocessing plant in northwest England held a 12-hour strike on Monday. The dispute began last summer after the GMB union members rejected a derisory pay offer of just £4.30 a week.

**UK building products company Tarmac faces strikes**

Workers at the Tarmac Building Products factory in Essex, England have voted overwhelmingly to strike, with a series of one-day strikes to begin January 30 stretching into March. They are fighting the proposal to employ new employees on contracts with lower pay and worse conditions than current staff.

The Unite union was in discussion with the employer on Wednesday, with the outcome not made public.

**Electricians working on UK rail project to hold further strikes**

Electricians employed on the construction of the Crossrail railway line in London are to hold a series of four weekly one-day strikes beginning February 7.

On January 19, 80 electricians employed on the Woolwich section of the London's new Crossrail railway line took strike action to win improved second tier payments and a four-week finishing bonus. It was the first official action against project manager construction company Balfour Beatty, though there have been unofficial strikes.

**London Dockland Light Railway staff set to strike again**

Dockland Light Railway staff employed by facility management company ISS are to hold a 48-hour strike beginning February 1 for a pay increase. The members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), are responsible for providing cleaning, security and information services to passengers. They took strike action on New Year's Eve over the same issue.

© World Socialist Web Site

**Strikes at schools in UK capital against academisation**

Teachers at Avenue School in Newham, east London are to hold a two-day strike beginning January 31. They held previous one-day strikes in November and December.

Teachers at Newham's Cumberland school, who took strike action earlier this month against plans to turn their school into an academy, will hold a further strike in February. A possible joint strike may take place on February 22.

Parents in both schools support the actions of the teachers and are opposed to academisation. Teachers at both schools are members of the National Education Union.

**Legal threat to London cinema strikers**

Staff at five Picturehouse cinemas in London held a strike Saturday and Sunday as part of their long-running campaign to be paid the London Living Wage, currently set at £10.20 an hour. They are also seeking improvements in sick and maternity pay.

They had planned to hold a series of partial stoppages over the next 11 days. In response, Picturehouse management sent the workers letters citing a 2015 judicial decision, which ruled that staff taking partial action in a dispute would lose pay for the whole shift.

Quoted in the *Metro* newspaper, Gruff Jones, one of the strikers explained, "We had chosen to undertake a symbolic strike rather than an all-out disruptive one… However as a result of this move by management we have no choice but for all future strikes to last the entire day."

**Cleaners in hospital in Swindon, England ready to continue fight after employer Carillion goes into liquidation**

Hospital cleaners at the Great Western Hospital (GWH) in Swindon in south west England voted unanimously to strike, to be followed by a formal ballot. The cleaners are angry over the insufficient number of staff to cover floating shifts.

Another grievance is that managers often ask workers to leave a shift early and to take the rest of the shift as leave. This has led to the erosion of their leave entitlement, meaning they are unable to book a block of days to take a holiday.

The GMB union members were employed by Carillion, which was in the process of selling off its cleaning franchise to another private operator, Serco, before it collapsed.

The union is doing all it can to prevent industrial action. The *Swindon Advertiser* reported that at a "heated meeting" on Monday, "GMB branch secretary Andy Newman told the Carillion hospital workers that they had played a part in the downfall of super-contractor Carillion." In relation to a previous strike by cleaners in 2012 over "bullying" by managers at GWH, Newham continued, "You know you can go on strike at that hospital and you can win. I don't think we need you to. Sometimes you've voted to go on strike action, but you haven't needed to."

Speaking to the *Swindon Advertiser* after meeting with GWH executives, Newham said; "They've also said that now might not be the best time [to strike], because they want Serco to take over. They believe that Serco is a better company to deal with than Carillion. We [GMB] think that the Serco take over will allow the other problems to be sorted out."

**Belgian Deliveroo couriers strike**

Around 200 Deliveroo couriers in Belgium held a strike on January 13 and plan to strike each Saturday. They are protesting the company's announcement that it regards all its couriers as totally self-employed operators, and not employees eligible for associated benefits.

Previously they had been able to work as Deliveroo couriers through an agency and so were entitled to some protection. They have held protests in Brussels, Liege, Antwerp and other Belgian cities.

**Protest by striking French Holiday Inn staff**

A group of hotel staff working as chambermaids, housekeepers and kitchen porters at the Holiday Inn hotel in the Paris suburb of Clichy have been on strike since October last year. Among their demands are to be employed directly by Holiday Inn, an end to piecework and unpaid overtime.

Holiday Inn is part of the InterContinental hotel group and the workers are employed by a subcontractor, Hemera.

On Saturday, the CGT union members picketed the Geneva InterContinental hotel to publicise their dispute. They have previously held protests in Paris, Barcelona and Brussels.

**Italian metalworkers rally against industrial accidents**

Metalworkers in the Italian region of Lombardy held a one-hour strike Monday against unsafe working conditions. They also rallied in Milan. The strike and demonstration were jointly organised by the FION-CGIL, FIM-CISL and UILM-UIL unions.

Recent industrial deaths in the region highlight the unsafe working conditions they endure. On January 17, three workers at the Lamina steel works in Milan died from nitrogen intoxication. On January 19, a 19-year-old employed by Ellettronica LG in Brescia died after being caught in a lathe.

**Cypriot bank workers walkout**

Staff at the Cypriot Central Bank walked out on strike between 10am and 12 noon on Wednesday. The members of the Etyk union are protesting stalled talks that have been ongoing since September last year over restructuring proposals, including differences over staff reviews and vacancies.

**Turkish metal workers to strike**

© World Socialist Web Site

More than 130,000 Turkish metal workers in the car making, white goods and iron and steel industry have announced they will strike on February 2. They are pushing for a pay increase of over 30 percent. The industry association, the Metal Industrialists Union (MESS), has responded with threats of a lockout. Workers have rejected the latest MESS offer of a 6.4 percent pay increase over three years and a 12.8 percent rise in social benefits.

The Turkish Metal Union, the United Metal Workers Union and the Iron, Steel, Metal and Metallic Products Workers' Union represent the metal workers. Protracted negotiations have been taking place since September last year.

Middle East

**Palestinian workers in general strike**

Palestinian workers held a general strike Tuesday, leading to the closure of shops, businesses, schools and government institutions. The strike was to protest US vice president Mike Pence's visit to Israel. The strike shut down all sectors across the occupied territories except for education and health facilities.

**Tunisian demonstration broken up by police**

Workers and youth marched in the southern Tunisian town of Metlaoui in the governorate of Gafsa on Sunday. They were protesting the high levels of unemployment and demanded jobs. The state-owned phosphate company Gafsa had just released the results of a recruitment drive—leaving many disappointed.

Police broke up the demonstration using tear gas. Police also clashed with protesters in the town of Mdihal in the region over the same issue. Unemployment in Tunisia is running at over 15 percent; for youth the rate is 30 percent.

Africa

**Zimbabwe power distribution workers strike made illegal**

A threatened strike by Zimbabwe power workers due to take place at the beginning of this week was ruled illegal by the country's labour courts.

Workers in three unions, who are employed by the Zimbabwe Electrical Supply Authority, are demanding a 75 percent wage increase to offset economic instability and the implementation or upgrading of several allowances.

The claims go back to a 2012 collective bargaining agreement reneged on by the employers.

The introduction of Zimbabwe bonds as currency in 2016 has created five price variations across the economy, undermining wages by more than 80 percent. A worker paid the new bonds has less buying power than those with access to the dollar.

**South African food workers union end strike with sellout deal**

The South Africa's Food and Allied Workers Union struck a deal with Tongaat Hulett Starch last Friday to end a two-week strike.

The dispute involved 300 employees and the resolution was mediated by the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration.

The union abandoned the original claim for a 10.5 percent wage increase and premium pay for certain upper grade employees when working on weekends and public holidays. Instead, they settled for a 7.1 percent wage increase for top graded workers and 8.5 percent for the lowest grade. Claims for standby allowances and premium pay for working out of hours were put on the back burner.

**South African university workers strike over outstanding wage deals**

The week-old strike at South Africa's Durban University of Technology is to continue after unions refused management's latest offer of a six percent wage and housing allowance increase. Workers are demanding a 10 percent pay rise.

The unions involved are the National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union, the Tertiary Education National Union of SA and the National Tertiary Education Union.

Negotiations should have concluded in September last year for a 2018 wage settlement to be implemented January this year.

Strikes at several other universities are continuing or set to get underway over stalled wage negotiations and unsatisfactory pay offers at the University of South Africa, WITS University and University of Pretoria. Student registration will go ahead online as pickets are blocking entry to the universities.

**Nigeria's trade union federations call ineffective warning strikes**

The Nigerian Labour Congress, the Trade Union Congress and the Joint Negotiating Council have called for a three-day warning strike starting Wednesday this week for all Oyo state employees. A previous warning strike lapsed January 23.

Workers are demanding the state government address the 13-week strike of tertiary education institutions and the sacking of workers at the Ladoke Akintola University Teaching Hospital. Workers are owed well in excess of a year's wages, and pension payments have not been paid out for nearly five years.

A representative of the trade union bodies appealed to the state on behalf of the sacked teaching hospital workers to "consider" the workers' hardship. At the same time, tens of thousands of public sector employees are being thrown out of their jobs across Nigeria.

**Benin workers oppose parliament's vote to ban strikes**

Public sector workers in Benin went on strike on January 16, in defence of the right to strike, bringing the capital Porto Novo to a halt. Workers have also protested the privatisation of health and education.

Parliament voted on December 28 to ban strikes in the military, the police and among health and justice workers.

The country's president, Patrice Talon, said tough choices had to be made, and the "state has to make our social and economic environment

© World Socialist Web Site

attractive and competitive in its management, administration and behaviour of its representatives.”

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**

© World Socialist Web Site