

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Europe

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

## Slovenia hit by strikes in public sector

A wave of strikes was held this week in Slovenia, involving 80 percent of workers in the public sector.

Public sector workers are calling for an end to austerity, increased pay and improved conditions.

On Monday, firefighters struck, as did 9,000 police. This was followed Tuesday by a two-hour strike by 40,000 health and social care workers, though not doctors. On Wednesday, thousands of teachers took part in strikes closing schools. A rally attracting over 10,000 was held in the capital, Ljubljana.

The strikes are a response to stagnant wage growth in Slovenia. A 2013 austerity budget limited wage increases. Workers are demanding increased pay amidst signs of economic growth. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for later this year.

## Train guards at South Western train in England take further industrial action

Employees at South Western Railway are taking industrial action beginning today, which will last until midnight Monday. The guards (conductors) and drivers are members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union and will not work any rest days. Guards have been instructed to refuse to work in accordance with sections of the Guards Restructuring Agreement.

This is the latest action in their long running dispute over the expanded use of Driver Only Operated trains, which threaten 6,000 job losses among guards, undermining passenger safety.

## UK cinema staff in London to begin week long strike

Over 200 cinema staff at five Picturehouse chain cinemas across London will strike for a week as part of a long-running dispute.

The members of the BECTU trade union in Brixton, Hackney, Central London, Crouch End and East Dulwich are demanding to be paid the London Living Wage, and for improvements in sick and maternity pay.

## Colleges in South England to strike over pay

Lecturers at 16 colleges mainly in London or the southeast of England have voted by big majorities to take two-day strikes over the next few weeks.

The University and College Union members are opposed to a derisory one percent pay offer and are demanding improved working conditions including holiday entitlement.

## Scottish cleansing staff Glasgow to be balloted

A consultative ballot of around 1,100 street cleaning and refuse collection staff working for Glasgow City Council resulted in over 80 percent in favour of taking industrial action. A full vote by GMB and Unison members will take place between February 19 and March 9.

The issue is over the council's plans to end the temporary contracts of 130 of the staff (12 percent of the workforce), set to expire on March 31. Many of those taken on had previously been long-term unemployed.

## Teachers at school in Derbyshire, England hold strike to oppose academisation

Teachers for years 7 to 10 at the Friesland school in Sandiacre, Derbyshire in England went on strike for three days from Tuesday.

The members of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers struck to oppose plans by the school to become an academy.

## Staff at London's Royal Observatory and National Maritime Museum to strike

Museum staff at the Royal Observatory and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, will strike on Saturday. They are

opposing changes in employment conditions, including shorter breaks, being forced to work extra hours for no pay, and changes in shift working hours.

The Prospect union members previously took action on New Year's Day.

### **French hotel staff end 111 day strike at Holiday Inn**

Twelve cleaners and housekeepers, out of a workforce of 42, working for subcontractor Hemera at the prestigious Holiday Inn hotel in the Clichy area of Paris have ended their 111-day strike.

The action, including rallies and demonstrations across Europe, began in October last year to protest the forcible transfer of members of staff by Hemera. Other issues included piecework rather than payment by the hour and their wish to become direct employees of Holiday Inn.

Staff will now no longer be transferred against their will after working more than 12 months at one location, and they will be paid by the hour rather than per room. However, they will still not be directly employed by Holiday Inn.

### **French Nestle workers in Nice hold protest**

On February 9, around 200 workers at the Nestle-Galderma research centre in the southern French city of Nice traveled to Switzerland to protest outside Nestle HQ in Vevey.

The FCE-CFDT and FGA-CFDT union members are opposed to plans to close the research centre.

### **Italian Ryanair staff strike**

Staff employed by the Ryanair airline in Italy, excluding pilots, held a four-hour strike on February 10. They are demanding serious negotiations over pay and working conditions. The Ryanair pilots' union, ANPAC, did not take part.

At the end of last year, Ryanair reversed a 32-year policy of not recognizing unions, but would only grant negotiating rights to unions such as ANPAC.

Other airline workers took action the same day with a four-hour strike by Blue Panorama staff and an eight-hour one by Vueling employees. Air traffic controllers held an eight-hour strike.

### **Dutch teachers strike**

A regional strike by 6,000 Dutch primary school teachers took place Wednesday in the provinces of Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe.

They are demanding increased pay, better working conditions and for the Dutch government to commit more money to overcome the teacher shortage in the Netherlands.

The strike was the first in a series of planned rolling stoppages. Teachers in the provinces of Flevoland, Utrecht and Noord Holland will strike on

March 14. They will also hold a rally in the Dutch capital, Amsterdam.

### **Strike threat by Dutch Transavia airline pilots**

The 500 pilots working for the budget airline wing of KLM, Transavia, are threatening to strike throughout the second half of February. Their demands include a pay rise and rearrangement of rosters to improve the work-life balance.

### **Strike by cleaners at Cypriot hospital**

Cleaners at the Archbishop Makarios III hospital in Nicosia held a 12-hour strike on Thursday. The Oekdy Sek and Pasyek Peo union members have several grievances including staffing, out-of-date equipment and having to follow procedures they claim are unhygienic.

Middle East

### **Hospital cleaning staff in al-Shifa hospital strike Gaza**

Around 800 cleaning staff at the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza began an indefinite strike on Sunday. The strike has led to the cancellation of hundreds of operations due to a hygiene crisis. The cleaners have not been paid for several weeks.

Africa

### **Nurses at South African clinic strike over unpaid overtime**

Nurses at the Tshamahansi clinic near Mokopane, Limpopo, South Africa went on strike last week over unpaid overtime, owed R1300 (US \$109).

The province's health department declared the strike illegal.

### **Strike at Durban University of Technology in South Africa enters fifth week**

The lecturers' strike at Durban University of Technology is entering week five despite the intervention of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

The stalemate is caused by university management maintaining a 6 percent wage offer. Their stance has been enforced by assaults on staff by university security firing rubber bullets, supported by a large police contingent.

While the university has been hit by the strike, student registration has taken place solely on the Internet. Management promised students their courses would only be delayed for a week, until February 12. The union said staff shortages caused by the strike, despite the bringing in of casuals, make resumption of lectures very unlikely.

### **Nigerian police violently attack striking university staff**

Nigerian police used tear gas to attack workers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, as they continue their third month of strikes.

The strike is over longstanding issues regarding the federal government renegeing on a 2009 memorandum of understanding, and demands for non-payment of owed allowances, and what is, unions say, an illegal matriculation process.

Police also carried out early morning raids arresting union leaders from the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities and the National Association of Academic Technologists.

### **Nigerian civil servants unions reluctantly call indefinite strike in Kano state**

Civil servants have given the Nigerian Kano state government until March 5 to call a halt to unexplained deductions from wages.

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Joint Public Service Negotiating Council (JPSNC) threatened a three-day warning strike if the government continues to use a private company to deal with wages.

NLC and JPSNC accuse the company of unexplained regular deductions from workers wages of N361 (\$1) and N168 from pensions.

Other outstanding issues include unpaid wage increases and promotions.

### **Mental health workers in Nigeria's Enugu state strike over unpaid wages**

Hospital workers came out on indefinite strike last Friday at Nigeria's Neuropsychiatric hospital in Enugu state.

Two previous warning strikes, one for 21 days and the other for seven, got no response from the state or federal government.

The members of the Joint Health Service Union are protesting about unpaid wages over the last year, promotion arrears and to demand the incorporation of the hospital into the Integrated Payroll Personnel Information System.

Workers in a separate union, the University Graduates of Nursing Science Association, also joined the strike, over service abuse and alleged corruption by the medical director.

The union warned of the implications of the strike if the dispute was not resolved, stating "the current situation in the hospital if not checked will result in a breach of peace and a breakdown of law and order." The medical director's personal secretary is on trial for alleged corruption involving millions of naira.



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