Ukrainian miners strike over unpaid wages

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.

Ukrainian miners strike over unpaid wages

Some 10,000 Ukrainian coal miners began strike action last week over unpaid wages. They work for the state-owned Selydove Coal at four mines around the town of Novogrodika, just outside of an area controlled by Russia-backed separatists.

Hundreds of pickets were at the gates of the mines to ensure only necessary maintenance workers entered the pit. The workers said they have not been paid since December.

Around 25 percent of the arrears were paid following the intervention of the Ukrainian finance ministry. However, money for 2018 has not been paid, amounting to some US$18.5 million. “We were given part of our money, but it's just throwing dust in our eyes,” one miner told Agence France-Presse.

A delegation of miners travelled to Kiev hoping to meet Igor Nassalyk, minister for energy and coal mining.

There are some 150 coalmines in Ukraine, mostly located in the Donbass region in the east. Two thirds of the mines are in areas controlled by separatists.

Portuguese postal workers strike

Thousands of postal workers employed by the recently privatized postal service CTT came out on strike Thursday. Around 4,000 took part in a demonstration in the Portuguese capital Lisbon.

Organised in four unions, the workers are protesting against CTT’s plans to close 22 post offices and cut jobs while increasing workloads.

Greek kindergarten staff strike in Athens

Greek kindergarten staff went on strike Tuesday and took part in a protest rally in Athens. They were protesting pay cuts, staff shortages and a downgrading of their role due to austerity attacks by the Syriza government.

Dockland light railway staff in London strike

Staff at the outsourcing contractor ISS providing cleaning, security and information services on the Docklands Light Railway system, which serves the financial district in London, began a 48-hour strike at 5:30 a.m. on Thursday.

The long-running dispute is over ISS’s refusal to honour the current contract, grant a pay increase and treat workers in a respectful manner. The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members recently revealed the company was offering cash bribes to scabs to break the strike.

Further strikes at UK building supply company

Workers at Tarmac Building Products in Essex took strike action on Tuesday and Thursday. The company manufactures breezeblocks for the construction industry.

Further strikes are planned in March against plans by the company to put new starters on lower pay and inferior conditions, creating a two-tier workforce. Members of the Unite union voted by a huge majority for the strike and held two one-day strikes two weeks ago.

Finnish public welfare sector strike threat

Workers at the University of Helsinki have threatened a one-day strike.

Private kindergarten workers, many on zero-hours contracts, are threatening to strike March 7-8.

Workers in several Southern Finnish private educational institutions are also threatening to strike from March 5 to 9.

The members of JHL, Finland’s largest public welfare sector union, are seeking pay rises in line with other collective agreements.

Irish psychiatric nurses in Waterford and Kilkenny protest action

Psychiatric nurses in Waterford and Kilkenny began a campaign against understaffing, use of agency staff and overcrowding of patient facilities by refusing to carry out non-nursing duties—including non-essential meetings

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and answering phones.

The action by members of the Psychiatric Nurses Association affected the Psychiatric Department at University Hospital, the Grangemore, St Aidan's and Ard na Deise residential units in Waterford, as well as St Luke's hospital in Kilkenny.

Tunisian city Redeyef hit by general strike

Workers held a general strike Tuesday in the city of Redeyef in the mining area of the country. Protesters marched through the city demanding more jobs and increased security. Many local traders are reluctant to set up businesses because of the lack of security.

Strike by teachers in Algeria

Teachers belonging to five unions in Algiers came out on strike this week for a pay rise and improved conditions. They have joined hundreds of teachers in the provinces of Bejaia, Blida and Tizi Ouzou—on strike for the past three months against public spending cuts.

Lebanese hospital workers end strike

Hospital workers throughout Lebanon ended their open-ended strike Monday, following discussions between union representatives and the Lebanese health minister.

South Africa's Durban University strike continues

South Africa's Durban University of Technology (DUT) is into its sixth week of strike action.

DUT staff are demanding, under the aegis of the DUT Crisis Committee, an 8 percent pay increase, a R350 (US$30) increase in housing allowance, and a one-off bonus of R9 000 (US $770). The administration offered 6.5 percent wage increase, suspended lecturers and paid striking workers unexplained low wages without pay slips.

The strike has delayed the start of the academic year at DUT's four campuses, affecting around 21,000 students who are nevertheless sympathetic to their lecturers.

News 24 quotes a student saying, "We understand that the staff is frustrated and we plead with management to start taking their concerns seriously."

South Africa student funding agency in Johannesburg strike

Members of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) went out on strike Tuesday at South Africa's National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in Johannesburg.

Two hundred eighty NEHAWU members came out, supported by casual workers who want a contract. The workers' other demands are a wage increase and medical provision for employees' families.

Strikers demonstrated outside the offices of NSFAS Tuesday, threatening to bring other branches out if they don't get a response by today.

Miners strike over threat to jobs and wages in Mpumalanga, South Africa

South African miners went on strike and demonstrated at the Optimum Coal Mine in Mpumalanga Wednesday morning.

Members of the National Union of Miners marched to the mine demanding information on the future of the company, which supplies coal to the Eskom power generating company.

The mine is owned by one of the Gupta brothers, who has disappeared fearing prosecution for corruption, leaving the workers concerned about jobs and wages. Suppliers to the mine are rumoured to have not been paid for months. The bank that pays Optimum's wages, the Bank of Baroda, is about to close down.

Kenyan lecturers strike looms

Kenyan lecturers may resume their strike over a 2017-2021 collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

The government and the university employers body, the Inter Public Universities Council Consultative Forum (IPUCCF), refuse to negotiate. The previous 2013-2017 CBA did not get signed until it had all but expired in December 2017.

Members of the Kenyan University Staff Union have now given the government and employers an ultimatum.

Sudanese teachers and medical workers strike over unpaid wages

Sudanese medical assistants went out on strike early last week over unpaid wages and allowances, followed by medical specialists on Thursday who walked out in support.

Other workers haven't received their bonuses and are expected to join the escalating strike movement.

Teachers in Khartoum state struck over unpaid wages Wednesday. Secondary school teachers responded to the strike call.

Four teachers involved in the strike are still detained without charge by the security forces, while the leader of the teachers union has been summoned by the National Security and Intelligence Service on two occasions and held for several hours.

Families of the detained teachers have protested outside the Khartoum Human Rights office and appealed to the UN.

Zambian lecturers in Nkana strike over unpaid wages and for better conditions

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Zambian lecturers from the College of Education in Nkana began strike action this week demanding their salaries be brought up to date. They have not been paid for nine months. They are also demanding improved working conditions. The lecturers held a demonstration in the city square.

Liberian construction strike in Congo town for unpaid overtime

Construction workers in Congo town blocked the Tubman Boulevard to demand their employer pay between eight months to a year's overtime owed to them.

Their employer, the Jiangsu Provincial Construction Group Company, is building a $40 million Chinese funded ministerial compound. The workers were hired to assist the Chinese engineers at $6 a day plus $2.50 overtime.

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