

40,000 Slovenian teachers in one-day strike

# 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.

## 40,000 Slovenian teachers in one-day strike

Around 40,000 Slovenian teachers held a one-day strike on Wednesday demanding a pay rise of between eight and 12 percent. Around 10,000 teachers in the SVIZ union rallied in the central square of Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, carrying placards and balloons.

The value of wages has fallen since government austerity measures introduced in 2013. Teachers earn €500 a month less than other public sector workers.

“The work of a teacher is undervalued. We have to do a lot of work but our wages do not match our responsibilities,” one teacher told Reuters.

Teachers and other public sector workers have held stoppages earlier in the year, demanding pay increases. Another walkout is set for April 17 unless their demands are met.

With a general election set for June, the government is striking a pose of “fiscal responsibility” to resist public sector demands for wage increases. Officials say that the wage increases are not justified by productivity and GDP growth, although the economy is expected to expand 3.9 percent this year.

## Further strikes against academisation in UK capital school

Teachers at Avenue Primary School in Manor Park in the London borough of Newham held three days of strikes this week. They are fighting plans by the council to transfer the running of the school to the EKO Trust academy in April.

Teachers were supported by parents on the picket line. They previously held seven days of strikes and another three days of strikes are planned beginning Tuesday of next week.

The National Education Union want the dispute referred to the government’s conciliation service Acas.

## Ukrainian miners protest wage arrears

Coal miners at the Ukrainian Rodynska mine refused to sign on their shift on Tuesday. Miners on the overnight shift, who are protesting the non-payment of January’s wages, refused to come up to the surface.

## Pension strike by water workers in northwest England

Around 1,000 water workers employed by United Utilities are on strike today and will be again next Monday. There will also be an overtime ban, no advice service to councils or refuse call-outs.

The company plans to replace their current pension scheme with one that means some staff losing up to £10,000 a year.

The members of the Unison, Unite and Prospect unions include pipe maintenance, wastewater treatment workers and clerical workers at the company’s offices.

## Further strike by rail guards in south UK against use of driver-only operated trains

Rail guards working for Southern Rail held a 24-hour strike on Monday against the extension of driver-only operated trains (DOO).

For nearly two years, Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members have fought DOO, which is being rolled out by rail franchises nationally, endangering passengers and threatening the loss of 6,000 jobs among guards.

The union has refused to mobilise its 83,000 members in opposition, with RMT General Secretary Mick Cash calling on the rail company to resume negotiations.

## UK Merseyside car seat manufacturing workers begin strike ballot

A ballot began Monday of workers at Adient Seating UK Ltd, based at Ellesmere Port on Merseyside, over possible strike action. The company plans to get rid of a premium shift payment, which would mean a £70 a week pay cut.

The firm supplies car seats for Vauxhall Motors based on Merseyside. The ballot will close next Monday, and, if affirmative, strike action will commence after Easter.

Most of the workers are in the Verdi union. Verdi has not indicated which sectors will be targeted.

Employers have dismissed the proposed wage hikes as too expensive.

### **Al Jazeera staff in England hold ballot for strike action**

Staff working for Al Jazeera in England are being balloted for strike action in a dispute over pay. The ballot by the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union and National Union of Journalists opened Tuesday.

Two years of negotiations under the auspices of the conciliatory service Acas have resulted in no progress.

### **Spanish Amazon workers set to walk out**

More than a thousand workers at Amazon's San Fernando logistics warehouse near Madrid are to walk out on March 21 and 22.

Amazon is proposing a new contract, including pay cuts and reduced enhancements for working weekends and holidays. The workers are members of the CCOO union.

The company also employs around 900 temporary workers.

### **Strike plans at French supermarket**

Staff working for French supermarket chain Carrefour are to strike on March 31, in response to a €2 billion cost-cutting exercise announced in January.

Under the proposals, by 2020, over 270 underperforming Dia stores are set to close or be sold, losing around 2,000 jobs. A further 2,400 jobs will go through voluntary redundancies at the company's head office at Massy, near Paris.

The members of the FO and CFDT unions will see a 90 percent cut in their annual bonus, receiving only around €60.

Staff at the head office in Massy walked out at the beginning of the month to oppose the cutbacks.

### **Air France staff to strike over pay claim**

Workers at Air France have rejected a six percent pay claim, making a strike planned for March 23 likely. The company offered one percent.

A strike by Air France pilots, cabin crew and ground staff on February 22 over the same issue led to the cancellation of around half long-haul flights.

### **German public sector staff to stage warning strike**

About 2.3 million German public sector workers are to carry out a token "hours-long" warning strike in the run-up to Easter. They are demanding a six percent pay rise or at least an additional €200 a month over the coming year.

### **Israeli pharmacy staff strike**

Around 750 staff working for Maccabi Pharm at its 100 outlets came out on strike for improved working conditions on the morning of March 8.

The National Workers Union members work in pharmacies that serve the needs of around 2.5 million Israelis.

### **Gaza teachers strike**

Teachers in Gaza held a one-day strike on Wednesday, closing schools and other educational institutions to protest wage arrears and for pay parity with teachers in the West Bank.

In the past five months the Hamas-led Gaza government has paid its workers employed after its 2007 takeover of the enclave less than one-third of the salaries they are due.

### **Demonstrating Zambian miners attacked by police, army and company militia**

Zambian miners demonstrated against employer Gold Fields Ghana Limited, which is transferring production to contractors, with the loss of 2,000 jobs and casualisation of the workforce.

Demonstrators at the Tarkwa mine entrance were brutally set upon by the Tarkwa Nsuaem municipality police, the military and Gold Fields' own armed militia. The assault with guns and tear gas injured four workers, while seven were arrested.

### **Zimbabwe medics join junior doctors strike over pay and conditions**

Last Monday, Zimbabwe senior medics joined junior doctors on strike since March 1. The strike has spread from selected hospitals to the whole of Zimbabwe.

The previous government of Robert Mugabe reneged on promises to improve wages and conditions four years ago. Doctors have left the country in droves, as their basic pay is half the poverty datum line—they can earn \$2,834 monthly in South Africa compared to \$329 at home.

### **Sudanese doctors strike over wages and conditions**

Sudanese doctors struck on Thursday in East Darfur against poor wages and working conditions.

They are demanding an increase in wages, the provision of life-saving

medicines and diagnostic equipment, proper furniture in their offices and safe travel home.

They have given East Darfur Health Insurance three days to meet their demands.

### **Nigerian non-academic staff unions call off strike**

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) at Nigeria's universities has called off a strike by non-academic staff. The three unions comprising the JAC have accepted the Minister of Labour's promises to pay outstanding allowances of N8 billion within five weeks.

In a previous N23 billion payout of outstanding allowances to university staff, academics received 89 percent and non-academics just 11, while staff at three universities got nothing.

### **Gabon workers stage general strike**

A general strike by public and private sector workers in Gabon began on Monday, demanding improvements in allowances, payment of unpaid allowances, reinstatement of suspended bonuses and promotions on merit.

The Trade Union Confederation Dynamics Unit is demanding union recognition and the right to renegotiate pensions.

Workers in Gabon's oil industry face redundancies as companies, including Royal Dutch Shell, are in the process of selling up and moving out due to low oil prices.

### **Kenya academic staff pay strike continues**

University Academic Staff Union and Kenya Universities Staff Union workers are continuing their strike, with no end in sight.

The academic year has been put back more than three weeks, with 600,000 students in limbo.

Kenyan university management are asking the government to come up with Shillings (KES) 6.8 billion (US\$6.7 million) to finance the first year of a pay settlement. Academics say KES 10 billion (US\$9.8 million) is needed for the first year and around KES 38 billion (US\$37.5 million) for the four-year Collective Bargaining Agreement 2017-21.

The university managers' body, the Inter-Public Universities Councils Consultative Forum, applied to the courts to ban the strike. A decision will be made Friday.

Some universities have withdrawn employees' tax, insurance and pension funds.

### **Forensic pathologists in South Africa work to rule over training and promotions**

South African forensic pathologists began a work to rule on March 7 to demand training and qualifications from the Department of Health.

Hundreds of staff at the Forensic Medical Centres across Gauteng are concerned that without recognised formal training, they are unable to get

pay increases. The government have reneged on previous promises of training and certification.

Employers approached the labour court, and the action was made illegal under a 2016 ruling, even though National Health Education and Allied Workers' Union said they did not organise the dispute.

### **South African water workers strike over collapsing water industry**

Three and a half thousand public sector water workers went out on strike last week in South Africa to protest corruption, outstanding merit bonuses, safety and insourcing. The strike affected 53 water and sanitation departments across the country.

The National Health Education and Allied Workers' Union suspended the strike on Monday after winning apparent concessions. Global rating agencies are threatening to downgrade South Africa's economy based on the conditions of its water industry.



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