

## Spanish Amazon staff strike

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

23 March 2018

### Spanish Amazon staff strike

A strike by Amazon logistics workers at the San Fernando de Henares facility in Madrid began at 10 p.m. Tuesday night. Around 2,000 members of the CCOO trade union walked out against a new collective bargaining agreement.

The previous one expired more than a year ago and with the new contract Amazon is trying to push through a pay cut and reduce enhancements for working weekends and holidays.

The logistics centre is the company's biggest and Amazon workers ship out orders to Spain and Europe. There are about 1,100 regular Amazon workers and another 900 who work for temporary agencies on site.

The stoppage, which lasted through Thursday, mobilized some 98 percent of employees at the Amazon facility.

### Air France workers strike

Air France workers are striking today for a 6 percent pay increase. Pay has been frozen since 2011 at the part state-owned airline. The company has offered a pay rise of just 1 percent in two instalments tied to productivity.

The strike takes place in the midst of mass protests against President Emmanuel Macron's labour reforms.

The next Air France strike is planned for March 30, as the Easter holidays begin.

### Strike by public sector workers in Andorra

Public sector workers in Andorra went on strike last week, the first major stoppage in the sector since the 1930s, in opposition to government plans to extend the working week.

Custom officers, around 80 percent of teachers and other workers set up picket lines.

Andorra is a tiny principality between France and Spain with a population of around 77,000.

### Protest by Croatian telecom workers

Workers at the Croatian Telekom (HT) company demonstrated in Zagreb on Saturday to protest wage cuts, and the company's yearly sackings programme. Every year over the last four years the company has laid off 150 workers, half its permanent staff.

The company replaces sacked staff with agency workers at lower wages. This year it sacked 50 as well as some managers.

HT's parent company is Deutsche Telekom.

### Cypriot waste plant staff strike

Around 80 workers at the Koshi waste plant in the southern coastal port city of Larnaca struck on Monday between 6:30 a.m. and 10 p.m. The company refused to sign a new collective working agreement after the old one expired in December last year.

The workers have given the company three weeks to sign the new contract, after which they will take indefinite strike action.

### Strike by bus drivers in Limassol, Cyprus

Around 250 bus drivers employed by Emel, the Limassol bus company, held a 48-hour strike beginning Tuesday. They were seeking restoration of concessions in wages and benefits made in 2014.

The members of the Sek trade union confederation gave warning of the strike a month ago and last-minute talks failed.

### German telecom workers strike

Repair, customer services and sales employees at Deutsche Telekom struck in regions with the exception of Saxony, Tuesday and Wednesday this week. Around 3,500 workers were involved in the strike in pursuit of a 5.5 percent pay rise for all 55,000 Deutsche Telekom staff.

### Public sector workers in Bavaria, Germany strike

Public sector workers across Bavaria struck Tuesday to Thursday as part of a series of rolling strikes to be held before Easter. Services hit included public administration, hospitals and childcare. The Verdi union members are fighting for a 6 percent pay rise covering 2.3 million public sector employees.

### **Portuguese teachers' strike**

Teachers in Portugal began a four-day strike on March 13 over career progression and pay scales. Around two-thirds of the workforce, members of the National Federation of Teachers, came out.

### **Swiss United Nations staff strike**

Staff at the United Nations headquarters based in the Swiss capital of Geneva held a one-day strike on March 16. Out of 10 percent of the 9,500 staff who were balloted, 90 percent voted to strike. They were protesting a 3.5 percent cut in pay, set to rise to 5 percent in June.

### **Strike by bus drivers in Aberdeen, Scotland**

Bus drivers at First Bus in Aberdeen, Scotland went on strike Monday following a strike on March 16. The action is part of 11 days of action by the Unite union, members who oppose company plans to change break periods.

### **Further strike scheduled by rail guards at two UK rail franchises**

Rail guards working for South Western Railway are to strike over the Easter period from March 30 to April 3, in opposition to the company's plans to extend the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains.

Rail guards at Northern Rail will hold a 24-hour strike on Monday, March 26, followed by a 24-hour strike on Thursday, March 29.

DOO threatens 6,000 guards' jobs as well as passenger safety.

These are the latest strikes in a long-running dispute, which began April 2016. The Rail, Maritime and Transport Union are calling only sporadic, limited strikes at separate private rail franchises and are opposed to mobilizing union members nationally in a joint offensive.

### **Workers at UK arbitration body Acas vote to strike**

Staff working for UK government reconciliation service Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) have voted by a more than 80 percent majority to strike, in a 65 percent turnout.

Management have failed to address concerns of members of the Public and Commercial Services union who are in dispute over a number of issues including their increased workload and lack of resources.

### **Workers in several sectors prepare to strike in Finland**

Today's proposed strike of shipmates and officers, affecting cargo vessels and ferry services, has been postponed until April 6, following the intervention of the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The dispute is over pay and working hours.

Around 2,500 electrical workers employed by the Service Sector Employers group (Palta) are threatening to strike for nine days beginning April 9. About 5,000 IT and energy sector workers are set to walk out on March 26. The walkout by members of the Finnish Electrical Workers' Union would hit power production.

Finance workers are threatening strike action over pay and plans by banks and finance companies to impose weekend working. Members of the Pro trade union working for the OP Financial Group will walk out from March 26 till March 29. Staff at Danske and other banks are threatening to strike between April 9 and 12. Employees at the Nordea Bank in the Nousu trade union may strike from April 3 to 6.

### **Israeli Civil Administration staff strike**

Israeli Civil Administration staff responsible for running daily affairs in the West Bank began a strike on March 14 and continued it this week. They are protesting heavy workloads, and the failure of the government to implement promises to improve pensions made three years ago.

### **Continuing protests in neglected northeastern Moroccan city of Jerada**

Thousands of residents of Jerada marched through the Moroccan city on March 16 in protest at dire living conditions. The city was the centre of the Moroccan coal industry until the mine closed 20 years ago.

Many residents try to eke out a living by extracting coal from the abandoned mine to sell to well-off locals known as "coal barons"—many of whom are elected officials.

Last December, two workers died when a shaft collapsed. Protests, which take place regularly, have been brutally attacked by police. Many of the residents suffer from silicosis due to mining activity.

### **Zimbabwean teachers to join medical staff on strike for wages and conditions**

Zimbabwean teachers plan to join strikes by hospital doctors, junior doctors and nurses if their demands are not met by the second education semester.

Junior doctors, who earn half the poverty datum line (PDL), are demanding that their income be lifted above the poverty level and the implementation of a 2014 agreement.

Doctors and nurses followed the juniors on strike as they don't have drugs and the necessary facilities to carry out their jobs. On Tuesday,

anaesthesia registrars and other vital staff joined the strike, despite government claims the strike had been called off.

Members of seven teachers' unions will strike in May to demand the government lifts their earnings above the PDL. They will demonstrate at President Mnangagwa's office on March 27.

### **Togo teachers and medical staff strike for better pay and conditions**

Togo health workers and teachers organised in the Workers Synergy union federation have been on selective strike since February over wages and conditions. The strike continued this week.

Health workers haven't the necessary equipment to carry out their work in the hospitals.

Other workers in the Workers Synergy began national strike action to demand the government release jailed striking teachers.

### **South African toll road workers stop scabbing operation**

South African tollgate operators, on strike since Monday at the Marianhill toll plaza in KwaZulu-Natal, have stopped a scabbing operation.

Pickets turned out at 5 a.m. Monday morning and set up roadblocks with burning tyres at the toll sites in KwaZulu-Natal.

Intertoll Africa was given a two-day strike warning on Friday after workers rejected a pay offer put by the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union.

The union initially called for a minimum monthly wage of R7,000 and R11,000 for supervisors—the average pay is R2,900. The company, a subsidiary of Group 5, is offering R3,970 and R7,066 respectively.

Around 25 workers maintained the picket at the N3 motorway tollgates, with no tolls in operation at motorways N1, N2 and N4.

### **South African solar energy workers strike against poor wages and benefits**

Workers employed on a solar energy project are on indefinite strike at Abengoa, South Africa. The National Union of Metalworkers are demanding an increase in wages and allowances.

Abengoa is developing alternatives to coal burning at Eskom, South Africa's power-generating company—a transition that threatens five power plants in Mpumalanga and 30,000 jobs.

### **South African health workers protest pay, conditions and corruption**

South African workers in health and social development have taken go-slow action for several weeks over pay and working conditions.

The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union South Africa has organized a demonstration against corruption this Tuesday in Mahikeng, capital city of North-West Province. Members of the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa will join them.

### **Nigerian general strike threatened over embezzlement of workers' contributions**

Members of Nigeria's United Labour Congress (ULC) have threatened a general strike if the government does not investigate the embezzlement of over N30 billion of workers' pensions and savings contributions.

A whistle-blower leaked that the Nigerian Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF), run by government ministers and trade union leaders, has been looted for years.

Board members in the period 2012 to 2015 siphoned off N18 billion, (US \$50 million) diverting money by e-payment mandate into their own accounts.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari commissions the board annually and appointed the president of the Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers, Frank Kokori, as chairman in 2017.

Nigeria's Labour Minister said, "N5bn was taken in one day, that's not the only amount missing. Over N30bn (US \$83.3million) cannot be accounted for and the members of the past board participated actively in the looting." The Trust Fund's accounts have not been audited for five years.

ULC members served on the NSITF board.

### **Kenyan lecturers continue strike while appealing back-to-work order**

Lecturers at Kenya's universities are continuing their strike despite the Labour Court ordering them back to work on Monday. Workers are challenging the ruling on the grounds they were not present to put their case.

The strike of 27,000 university staff and 9,000 lecturers began on March 1, against low salaries and poor facilities—shutting 33 universities and affecting 600,000 students.

The court also demanded that the university vice chancellors put forward—within the next 30 days—a counterproposal with the unions on the 2017-21 outstanding collective bargaining agreement.



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