

Airline and rail strikes continue in France as educators in South Africa, Sudan and Zimbabwe join worldwide teacher revolt

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Dockworker strike paralyses Sudan's ports

Twenty-thousand Sudanese port workers brought dock operations to a standstill in a nine-hour strike on May 2 to oppose privatisation. The strike ended after Port Sudan was besieged by government forces, who detained the leader of the Cargo Workers Union.

The director of security is now overseeing negotiations. Workers are opposing the formation of holding companies—which hold state assets in preparation for privatisation—fearing major job losses.

Teachers in Khartoum, Sudan, demonstrate over unpaid wages and allowances

Dozens of teachers carried out a demonstration at the Khartoum-based Ministry of Education in Sudan Tuesday to protest unpaid April wages. This was a repeat of a protest in March for the same reasons.

The Teachers Committee condemned the government for removing a meal allowance for first-grade teachers and called on teachers to support a sit-in. Teachers are also demanding wage increases and arrears payments. Police arrested several teachers, releasing some after a few hours. Others are unaccounted for and cannot be contacted on their phones.

South African teachers demonstrate over wages and conditions

South African teachers attended a protest outside the KwaZulu-Natal provincial parliament in Pietermaritzburg last Thursday. They gathered ahead of a budget decision to demand a 2016 wage agreement be implemented. The educators, members of the National Teachers Union and South African Democratic Union, have not been paid their April wages and lack textbooks for their students.

South African bus strikers a month without pay

South Africa's national bus strike continued into its fourth week, with

drivers pressured under a no-work no-pay diktat. The bus companies' association carried out threats to revert to its previous wage increase offer and rejected improvements to working hours, allowances and conditions. Under pressure from their members, the five unions involved threatened to reinstate their original claim of 12 percent, up from 9.5 percent.

More than 50 bus companies are involved in the strike, affecting hundreds of thousands of commuters.

Zimbabwe government sack threat if teachers strike

The Zimbabwe government has threatened teachers who plan to strike with the same treatment meted out to nurses. A few weeks ago, 5,000 of 16,000 nurses striking for better pay and conditions were sacked. Those who reapplied for their jobs under new contracts lost their pensions and benefits.

The strike, due to start Tuesday this week, was postponed by the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe and the Amalgamated Rural Teachers of Zimbabwe, pending a meeting with the government.

Public sector workers are demanding industrial action alongside the teachers. The Apex Council recommends they accept a government offer of a 10 percent wage and benefit increase, while workers demand a 300 percent increase from \$253 to \$720 a month.

President Mnangagwa, then vice president, was responsible for a 2015 ruling that gave companies the right to walk away from contracts with only three months' notice and little or no compensation. This led to an avalanche of job losses.

National strike by Romanian health workers ended by unions

Health workers in Romania held a two-hour strike Monday against government-directed cuts against their wages. Protests were held outside hospitals across the country.

In order to sow divisions, the government imposed wage cuts on some health workers while increasing doctors' salaries. Health unions called off an all-out strike set for today after promises by the government to look into the issue and to cover wage losses starting from just a few days ago, on May 1.

Sit-in protest by Greek power workers

Several power workers employed by the Public Power Corporation (PPC) began a sit-in protest at its headquarters on May 2. The Genop union members are opposing the pseudo-left Syriza-government plans to sell off two lignite plants. They are currently undertaking a series of 48-hour strikes.

Public sector workers in Greece to hold nationwide strike

Greek civil servants in the ADEDY trade union federation are set to strike nationally on May 30. They are opposing the Syriza government's evaluation of all public sector jobs as it enforces its austerity programme.

Air France staff reject offer as airline and rail strikes continue

Air France ground and cabin crew workers began a 48-hour strike on Monday, the 14th day of action. Their action overlapped with French rail workers at the SNCF state rail firm, who held a further two-day stoppage beginning Sunday. They are opposing plans by the French government to privatise the service and attack jobs and conditions.

Last week, the workers rejected a 7 percent pay offer over four years by a 55 percent majority. The company, which employs around 48,000 staff, pays them salaries of between €2,000 and €3,000 a month.

Train guards at two UK rail companies strike over driver-only operated trains

Train guards at two of the UK's private rail companies, Northern and Anglia, went on strike Wednesday in opposition to the companies' plans to extend the use of driver-only operated trains (DOO).

DOO threatens passenger safety and 6,000 jobs nationally. The Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union has limited workers' action in the two-year dispute to regional, short-term strikes in order to isolate and dissipate struggles, while not fundamentally impacting rail operations.

Recycling staff in Hull, UK, continue strike

The dozen workers employed in Hull by Spanish-owned multinational environmental firm FCC are in the second week of a strike over the company's refusal to pay sick pay in line with that paid to management.

The Unison trade union members sort and recycle waste for Hull City and East Riding councils—a service now outsourced to FCC. They have taken previous strike action over the same dispute. Council refuse staff are refusing to cross picket lines at FCC.

Refuse collectors in Kirklees, UK, vote to strike

Around 70 refuse collectors employed by Kirklees council in West Yorkshire have voted by over 80 percent to strike for seven days. Members of the Unison union voted to strike against management bullying and being refused holiday leave.

The workers together are owed holiday leave amounting to over 20 years. Due to staff shortages, even short-term leave such as half a day for family emergencies is refused. The council said it will set up a commission to look at its refuse collection service. The union has not set a date to begin action. Management said the strike would jeopardise the domestic waste collection service.

Scottish oil workers reject pay offer

Oil workers on the Mariner offshore platform near Aberdeen, employed by Aker Solutions Limited, have rejected a pay offer by a 90 percent margin. The Unite union members took unofficial action on April 7 against the terms of payment of a £6,000 bonus (US\$8,129)—the first £2,000 (US\$2,710) of the bonus dependent on the unrealistic target of striking oil by November 4. John Boland, Unite regional organiser, told the *Energy Voice* newsletter that strike action was a possibility if no reconciliation is found.

Increase in workers' protests in Egypt

According to a Democracy Index report issued this week by the Economist Intelligence Unit—a UK think tank associated with the *Economist* magazine—there were 299 protests by workers in Egypt demanding pay or benefit increases over the year up until May Day. More than a third of the protests involved sit-ins, while around a quarter were strikes. The research found that 95 workers were either briefly detained or arrested by the Al-Sisi dictatorship during that year-period.

The figures were an increase in the number of protests by workers in the year to April 2017. There were 244 protests calling for increased wages and the payment of annual bonuses, resulting in 186 arrests and the suspension of 2,691 employees.



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