

UK college lecturers in London, Bradford, Hull plan strikes as Iranian teachers protest pay in 30 cities

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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UK college lecturers in London, Bradford, Hull plan strikes

Lecturers at nine colleges in London are to strike on different dates this week and next over an insulting 1 percent pay rise.

Meanwhile, staff at Hull College in northern England are to begin a two-day strike on Thursday. They are protesting plans by college management to cut more than 200 jobs—a third of current staff.

At the same time, lecturers at Bradford College voted by a near 90 percent majority to strike over job cuts. The college proposes cutting 75 posts due to financial difficulties. At nearby Kirklees College, lecturers voted by a similar margin over the same issue, although staff in the Unison union did not meet the 50 percent threshold to allow action under anti-strike laws. No dates are set for the Bradford action.

At Lewisham Southward College in London, staff are to strike on May 22 and 23 over low pay, having only received one pay increase of 1 percent in the last five years and facing the refusal of their employer to pay the London weighting rate.

Lecturers at Sandwell College in the Midlands were due to strike, but following negotiations between the University and College Union and management, the action was called off after an “agreement in principle.”

March by university staff in Coventry, UK

Academic staff employed by Coventry University Group (CUG) held a march and rally in Coventry city centre on Wednesday. They are protesting having lower pay and worse conditions than staff employed directly by the University. CUG is a wholly owned subsidiary of Coventry University. CUG currently only recognises the Staff Consultative Group in negotiations.

University and College Union members at the University are demanding union recognition.

Vote to strike by airport staff at Luton, UK

Firefighters and security staff at Luton Airport near London have voted to strike over a week beginning May 25. The Unite members are protesting a miserly pay increase offer and zero hours contracts.

Baggage handlers working for Menzies Aviation, and workers employed by Clece Care Services, who assist disabled passengers, voted to join in.

While workers suffer low pay, Luton Airport has reported increased profits, with directors’ pay rising by around 50 percent. The airport employs more than 9,000.

Strike by UK Al Jazeera staff called off after renewed pay offer

Journalists at the UK office of the Al Jazeera TV service in London voted to accept a two-year pay offer.

A planned 24-hour strike was averted after talks between the NUJ and BECTU unions and management at the government arbitration office, Acas.

The dispute was settled with workers receiving 6 percent for this year backdated to January 1 and 3 percent from January 2019.

TGI Fridays restaurant chain staff in UK to strike

Waiters employed by US chain TGI Fridays at some of its Milton Keynes and London Covent Gardens outlets in the UK are to walk out on a 24-hour strike today. The members of Unite are protesting TGI Fridays’ new policy whereby tips paid to waiters are shared with kitchen staff. Waiters say they could lose up to £65 a week.

Strike planned by UK rail guards at Northern Rail

Rail guards at Northern Rail will strike for 24 hours on May 24 and May 26 over plans to introduce driver-only operated trains, which threaten 6,000 jobs and passenger safety.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union has limited workers’ action in the two-year dispute to regional, short-term strikes to isolate and dissipate struggles, while not fundamentally impacting rail operations.

UK government arbitration staff strike

Some grades of staff at the UK government arbitration office, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, struck on May 11. The Public and Commercial Services union members are protesting high caseloads.

Irish hospital staff vote for industrial action

Health care assistants and support staff at the two hospitals in Louth, Ireland, have voted overwhelmingly for industrial action, including strikes. Hospital management failed to implement an agreement with the Services Industrial and Professional Trade Union, to include previous service as interns when determining pay grades.

Further strike of French rail workers

French rail workers held their 17th and 18th days of strikes Sunday and Monday. The strikes were part of 36 strike days to be held every two days out of five up to early July.

Hundreds of rail workers marched through Paris Monday opposing the plans of the Macron government to privatise the state-owned SNCF rail company. This is part of an assault on the conditions of the working class, including the ending of legislation securing working conditions and pension entitlements brought in at the end of the Second World War.

Workers on the Paris RER suburban train service also struck Monday. In Marseille, students joined rail workers in picketing a major rail hub.

Metro strike in Greek capital

Several hundred employees at the Athens metro service held a 24-hour strike Monday, affecting lines 2 and 3. The members of the SELMA union were protesting staff shortages and inadequate equipment.

Strike threat by Slovak car workers

Last week, car workers at Peugeot in Slovakia gave a 30-day strike notice. The KOVO PCAS trade union members are demanding a 10 percent pay rise and have rejected a 6.8 percent offer by a government mediator. Peugeot employs around 2,000 staff in Slovakia.

Spanish Ryanair pilots' union walks out of negotiations

SEPLA have broken off talks after the Ryanair opposed granting the pilot unions' representatives three days a month for union duties. SEPLA represents 500 out of 800 Ryanair pilots.

Until last year, Ryanair opposed union recognition. The union is threatening legal action.

Ukrainian rail staff work to rule

Rail workers at five depots in a regional branch of the Ukrainian Southern Railway began a work-to-rule on Monday. The VPZU union members are protesting a lack of safety procedures and the dilapidated state of the rolling stock.

Protests by Iranian teachers

Last week, teachers held protests in 30 Iranian cities and towns across the country including Tehran. Organised by the Co-ordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations, they protested for higher wages, for increased funding for education, and against privatisation. Eight teachers were arrested.

Egyptian workers protest Cairo metro price increases

On Saturday, police arrested 10 protesters opposing ticket price rises on the Cairo metro. They allegedly jumped the metro barriers, refusing to pay.

The Egyptian al-Sisi regime has tripled some prices.

Iranian factory workers blockade railway line over unpaid wages

Workers from the Heavy Equipment Production Company (Hepco) industrial complex in the city of Arak protested on Monday by blocking the Iran North-South railway for several hours. Several hundred workers have not been paid for three months. Before privatisation, Hepco employed around 8,000 workers, reduced now to 1,000.

Israeli port staff return to work

Israeli dockworkers at the ports of Ashdod and Haifa returned to work on Sunday following a court order ending their three-day strike. They want job security as the government is inviting foreign firms to set up in ports.

Protests over South African mine worker deaths

Several dozen protesters demonstrated outside the Chamber of Mines in Johannesburg May 10, against the deaths of 33 miners this year. Figures

for miners' deaths in 2017 were 76, up from 73 in 2016.

The Confederation of South African Trade Unions and National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) called the protest.

In 2012, former NUM President Cyril Ramaphosa, now president of South Africa, played a central role in the deaths of 34 striking miners in Marikana who were shot down by police. The billionaire investor prompted the African National Congress government to send in armed police to break the strike.

Unions call off four-week bus strike in South Africa

Industrial action by 17,000 bus workers in South Africa has ended, with the five unions involved accepting a sell-out pay deal of 9 percent this year and 8 percent next year.

This will raise wages to around R7,500 a month, less than the 12 percent increase to the minimum wage of R8000 workers were demanding.

Unions also conceded to the employers' federation demand that the increase be paid from the date of signing rather than backdated to the earlier new contract date of April 1.

South African public sector workers prepare to strike

Members of the Public Service Association (PSA) are threatening to strike if the South African government does not increase its pay offer of 7 percent.

The PSA put in a claim for 10 percent and a housing allowance enhancement from R900 to R1500.

Separate negotiations are taking place on the same offer with the National Education Health, & Allied Workers Union.

Gambian training institute workers strike for secure and improved wages

Lecturers, cleaners, security guards and drivers at Gambia's Technical Training Institute walked off the job May 8.

The 160 workers want guarantees that their salaries are paid on specified days each month, a wage increase of 50 percent, transport allowances, and back pay from January of this year.

The Staff Welfare Association ordered workers back to work following a meeting with the institute's board of directors, with none of their demands fulfilled.

Kenyan university lecturers continue strike

Kenyan university employees have rejected the Inter-Public Universities Councils Consultative Forum's latest pay offer. The members of the Association of University Academic Staff Union have been in dispute for more than 15 months.

The offer represents a 0.43 percent annual pay increase over four years amounting to 1.75 percent. Average inflation for this year is around 5.4

percent and 6.3 percent projected for 2019.

Workers are demanding the implementation of the 2017-2021 Collective Bargaining Agreement, including a pay increase for the lowest paid lecturer from Sh82,037 to Sh195,000.

The Labour Courts have given university vice chancellors 30 days to present their offer, while demanding university staff return to work.

Zimbabwe government reneges on junior doctors' strike settlement

Gains won by Zimbabwe doctors from their strike six weeks ago, including on-call allowance increases from \$360 to \$720, have been annulled.

Zimbabwe teachers and civil servants demand to extend strike in face of union leadership opposition

The Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe is trying to curb striking teachers' demands for "a full-blown strike" of all the public sector. In a statement, the unions said, "[W]e are battling to calm them down so that we wait for the 14th of May negotiations with government."

The Zimbabwe Teachers' Association and the civil service unions are attempting to foist a 15 percent government offer onto teachers and other public servants. Workers rejected the union-backed government offer for a 10 percent pay rise.

Teachers and public sector workers demand a pay rise from \$253 to \$720 a month for the most poorly paid.

The government has threatened to treat striking teachers like striking nurses whom they sacked, as well as threatening their pensions.

Nurses and civil servants had annual holidays scrapped in 2016 under then-President Robert Mugabe and his vice president, Emmerson Mnangagwa—who is president today.

Nigerian medical workers extend strike to states and local facilities

Medical staff in the Joint Health Sector Unions extended their month-long strike to state and local medical facilities from last Thursday.

Workers are demanding the implementation of a salary structure, CONHESS, agreed on with the government in 2017.

The government has stationed armed guards at medical facilities and is pressuring strikers with the threat of an Ebola epidemic from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Doctors in the Nigerian Medical Association and the National Association of Resident Doctors are not striking.

A meeting on health care in Nigeria was co-hosted recently by *Forbes* finance magazine to discuss privatisation, with Dutch firm Philips Africa and accounting company KPMG represented.



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