

Dutch transport workers to strike, as rail stoppages continue in France

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

22 June 2018

Europe

Further French rail strikes

French rail workers are due to strike today and tomorrow as part of an ongoing series of strikes against President Emmanuel Macron's plans to end rail workers' work and pension conditions and to open the state rail company SNCF to privatization. Last week, the French government's proposal passed into law.

The rolling series of strikes are due to finish with a final two-day strike beginning June 27. The Stalinist CGT union is proposing further strikes on July 2, 6 and 7, with other dates through to September to be announced. The only other union to agree to join the action is the SUD.

Dutch transport strike announced

Dutch regional transport workers are to begin a nationwide indefinite strike on June 25. The action by 12,000 members of the FNV union will affect regional transport, including trains and buses across the country.

Workers are seeking a 3.5 percent pay rise, a toilet break every 2.5 hours and other measures to ease their workload.

A nationwide strike of transport workers took place on April 30 and May 1 followed by regional strikes.

Ten-day strike by French energy workers

Staff working at the state-owned EDF hydroelectric plants began a 10-day strike on Tuesday. The members of the Stalinist CGT union, together with the FO union, are protesting government plans to privatize the energy sector.

March in support of murdered migrant worker in Italian capital Rome

Thousands marched in Rome on Saturday to protest the murder of Soumayla Sacko, a 29-year-old migrant worker from Mali. He had been helping other migrant workers build temporary housing shelter on the outskirts of the city of San Ferdinando.

Sacko was an active member of the USB union. A local farmer has been arrested on suspicion of murder.

Around 4,000 migrant workers live in a shantytown near the city working as seasonal workers to bring in the harvest.

Strike threat at Croatian airlines

Employees at state-owned Croatia Airlines are poised to strike after talks between the ORCA union and management broke down this week. An official announcement is yet to be made.

They are seeking increased pay, a new, longer, collective agreement and less dependence on overtime.

Croatia Airlines employs nearly 1,000 and is looking to cut costs to attract private sector investment to overcome ongoing financial problems.

Unions at Air France call off strike

All but one of the unions representing Air France staff have called off the proposed strike scheduled between June 23 and 26. To date the pilots' union SPAF has not called off the planned action.

The strike had been timed ahead of the appointment of a new CEO at Air France in July. The previous CEO, Jean-Marc Janaillac, stepped down in May after failing to resolve the ongoing dispute with employees over a pay demand of between 5 and 6 percent. Reportedly, Air France lost over €300 million due to strikes earlier this year over wage claims.

Portuguese oil refinery strike

Oil refinery workers employed by Galp Energia at its refineries in Sines in southern Portugal and at Porto in the north held a five-day strike last week.

They were demanding that workers be included in collective bargaining. According to the Union Fiequimetal, around 75 percent of the workforce took part in the strike. Galp employs around 7,000 in Portugal.

Slovenian rail workers union suspends planned strikes

A union representing Slovenian rail workers employed by the rail operator Slovenske Železnice called off a strike due to have taken place on Tuesday.

Workers held a four-hour strike last week over pay increases, the employment of more staff and for better treatment by management. A union press release said talks have been productive and an agreement is expected.

Protests by Swiss rail staff

Around 1,400 workers from Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) held protests across the country on Monday in Geneva, Bern and Zurich.

The SEV public transport union members were protesting SBB's plans to attack conditions, including wage and job cuts. This is on top of plans already announced to destroy 1,400 jobs by 2020.

SEV is taking part in a series of negotiations with SBB planned until September.

Protest at sackings at Belgian technology firm

Union representatives from the Belgian IT company, DXC, held a protest in Paris on June 11 outside its headquarters.

DXC employees held a one-day strike on March 30 after the company began a series of layoffs. Around 90 workers were immediately laid off, with those over 45 targeted, and more layoffs to come.

The company did not follow legal procedures or a previously signed collective agreement.

Traffic wardens to strike in UK capital

Traffic wardens in the north London borough of Hackney are due to hold six days of strikes beginning July 9. The 40 Unite union members are employed by private contractor APOCA Parking (UK) Ltd.

They are striking in support of a 5 percent wage increase from April this year. They also oppose the unfair implementation of the sickness and annual leave procedures.

Struggle over elimination of guards on UK trains continues

The more than two-year dispute over the extension of the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains is continuing.

Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) at Arriva North, which operates trains in the north of England, struck Tuesday and Thursday and are due to strike again tomorrow.

Under the franchise deal between the government and Arriva North, the government recompenses the company for any losses associated with industrial action.

The RMT has limited workers' action to regional short-term strikes to isolate and dissipate struggles, while not fundamentally impacting rail operations. It called off three days of action due to have taken place from June 21 to June 23 at South Western trains over the same issue. The action would have hit race goers attending Royal Ascot.

DOO threatens passenger safety and 6,000 job losses.

Paramedic strike in northwest England

Around 200 paramedics working for the North West Ambulance Service in England held two-hour strikes at the beginning of each shift on Monday. The strikes, supported by more than 80 percent of the membership of the GMB union, are in response to delays in a job re-evaluation process that has been taking place over the last 13 years.

Another strike, for six-hours, is scheduled for June 29.

Unions call off UK college strike in Hull, Goole and Harrogate

A strike by lecturers working for the Hull College Group, comprising Hull, Goole and Harrogate colleges in the north of England, has been called off.

The University and College Union members were to strike over the proposed cutting of around 230 posts from the group's workforce. They were to have taken seven days of strikes over the next two weeks.

Africa

South African municipal workers strike over loss of benefits

South African municipal workers' in Port Elizabeth continued their strike this week, with a protest outside City Hall on Monday to mark the first week of action.

Most council services were paralysed as offices responsible for receiving bill payments were closed. Refuse collection was also halted in many areas.

The members of the South African Municipal Workers Union are demanding back pay of R75 million in total, or R30,000 to each of 3,000 workers. This is to compensate for the loss of benefits associated with the merging of Port Elizabeth, Despatch and Uitenhage districts into the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality.

Workers also demand an end to outsourcing, an increase in allowances and the reinstatement of suspended workers.

Members of the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union joined Monday's strike.

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South African water and sanitation workers strike

On Tuesday, Municipal workers blocked roads to the eThekweni Water and Sanitation Department plant in Durban, South Africa, with heavy earth shifting machinery.

Workers want to raise “grievances” with the city managers.

South African power generator company increases pay offer

Members of the National Union of Metalworkers/National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa from Eskom, South Africa’s power generating firm, are demanding a 15 percent pay rise.

The unions involved are putting Eskom’s latest offer to the membership. Eskom increased its pay offer from zero percent to just 4.7 percent.

Skilled workers in the Solidarity union are asking for 9 percent. Workers are also demanding an increase in allowances and an end to outsourcing.

South African truck drivers strike over missing subscriptions

South African truck drivers stopped work Monday over missing deductions from their wages, while also protesting outsourcing.

On Tuesday, about 150 trucks crowded both sides of the N4 carriageway at Komatipoort, close to Mpurnalanga, slowing traffic.

A spokesman for the Independent Motor Transport Union said the workers had been barred from entering the company premises.

Ugandan teachers demand equal pay for equal qualifications

Ugandan teachers are planning to strike on June 25 demanding equal pay in arts and science subjects.

Pay rates for equally qualified science and art teachers are Sh1.9 million (US \$454) and Sh600,000 (US \$156) a month respectively.

The government justifies the higher pay for science teachers to stem their exodus from the country.

Members of the Ugandan National Teachers Union also demand the pay increases promised them and benefitting other civil servants.

Ugandan university strikes spreading over pay arrears

University academic staff are continuing their week-long strike at Makerere Business School, Uganda. Members of Makerere University Business School Academic Staff Association (MUBASA) say the government and school management are not making any efforts to resolve their demands for Sh45 billion (US \$11.7 million) pay arrears.

MUBASA wants the principal to get in writing from the government a

statement promising to resolve the arrears issue in the budget.

The academics threatened not to supervise field work or mark students’ papers, affecting graduation in January.

Teaching and auxiliary staff in Uganda’s other nine universities are also proposing to strike in August if a pay increase and arrears payments are not written into the financial statement for the coming year—a provision of Sh138 billion (US \$35.3 million)

Nigerian non-teaching staff consider a return to strike over government’s refusal to honour agreement

Nigerian university non-teaching staff labelled the government “very insincere” after it reneged on a promised settlement last year. The unions are meeting July 4 to consider further action.

Three unions called off a three-month strike that began last December over the unfair disbursement of N23 billion in owed pay and allowances that discriminated against non-teaching staff. N8 billion is still unpaid.

Kenyan public employees issue strike notice over unpaid wages

Kenyan public-sector workers in Nyamira County issued a strike notice last week over five months’ outstanding salaries.

Wages should be paid on the fifth of each month by the employers, and failure to do so is illegal.

Members of the County Government Employees, the Kenyan National Union of Nurses and the Union of Clinical Officers and Civil Servants complain that when they demand their wages, their state employer threatens them with a head count. The head count could result in a purge of employees, with workers laid off.



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