

## Strike by South African footwear workers as South African and Nigerian telecom workers walkout

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

21 July 2018

### South African footwear manufacturing workers continue strike

Ten thousand footwear manufacturing workers in South Africa are continuing their eight-day national strike. Members of National Union of Leather and Allied Workers (NULAW) are seeking a 9.5 percent pay increase against the South African Footwear and Leather Industry Association (SAFLIA) offer of 6.25 percent.

NULAW claims that individual companies in SAFLIA are offering to settle separately—rejecting an industry wide settlement. SAFLIA cites market contraction by 17 percent this year.

### South African steel workers set to strike over wage demand

South African workers are threatening to strike at the ArcelorMittal steel mills if the company ignores their “fundamental” demands.

Members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) want an 11 percent pay increase and a raise in company contributions to medical aid from 60 to 80 percent. They also want a one percent increase in the provident fund.

The company is offering a 7.5 percent wage increase for the lowest paid and 6 percent increase on medical aid. Other staff, including managers, have been offered increases from six to 6.5 percent.

NUMSA is appealing to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration to solve the impasse.

### South African postal workers union ends strike with sell-out agreement

The South Africa post office workers strike that began July 3 was sold out Wednesday by the Communication Workers Union. The union originally demanded a 12 percent wage rise and then reduced this to 8 percent.

On Wednesday, the South African Post Office (SAPO) and trade unions, the Communication Workers Union (CWU), Democratic Postal Workers Union and the South African Postal Workers Union (SAPWU), reached an agreement under which Sapo employees will get a 6.5 percent increase, backdated to April 1.

The workers had previously rejected a zero percent and then the 6.5 percent offer from SAPO.

CWU and other communication unions accepted a two-year freeze in 2015, after a plea of bankruptcy by Telecommunications and Postal Services Minister.

The CWU is also demanding an end to casual work. SAPO is offering some part time workers extra hours and 500 permanent jobs.

### South African university union halve their wage claim

South African University workers at the Fort Hare University, Eastern Cape are continuing their month-long strike for a pay increase.

The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) has reduced its 15 percent claim to eight. The university management has cancelled negotiation meetings and stuck to its offer of 6.8 percent.

The University says the strike has led to the cancellation of the mid-year exams because of noisy picketing and is calling in the South African Police Service.

### Workers strike against mobile phone network provider in South Africa and Nigeria

Strikes at MTN South Africa and MTN Nigeria are taking place simultaneously but over different demands. The strike at the Nigerian network, which employs around 2,000, began last week, while the 4,000 South African came out on Monday.

Negotiations for a wage increase broke down between the South African MTN and the Communications Workers Union, provoking a demonstration at its Johannesburg international headquarters and a walk out.

The Nigerian strike takes place in MTN's largest market, with 55 million subscribers, and is over union recognition where almost all the workforce are casuals.

MTN is the mobile phone network provider for over 160 million subscribers in 22 countries, capitalised at US \$15.8 billion. The federal government has directed the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps to protect MTN facilities.

MTN's managing director, Phuthuma Nhleko, succeeded Cyril

Ramaphosa, now South Africa's president, five years ago.

### **South Africa social service workers strike derailed by union**

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) workers' strike, suspended by the Labour Court for seven days pending negotiations, has ended without resolving the agency workers demand for a 13 percent wage increase, medical subsidies and housing allowance.

The Public Service Association, bargaining with the Minister of Public Works and the Finance and Social Development ministers, have avoided a further strike by going through the courts.

### **Kenyan water workers strike for unpaid wages**

Kenyan water workers struck last week demanding 11 months unpaid wages and to demand the Noltresh Water and Sanitation Company be taken back under central government control.

Management appealed to a workers' meeting to return to work, threatening them with the sack. Workers refused a paltry offer of Sh7.5 million (US \$74,500). The workers are owed Sh70 million (US \$696,000.)

### **Nigerian port workers threaten strike over dangerous roads**

Nigerian port workers are threatening to strike unless the government fulfils its promise to repair seaport approach roads.

The Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria accused the government of reneging on a commitment to make the Oshodi-Apapa expressway approach to Lagos fit for vehicles before the end of July.

The poor road conditions have caused many accidents and deaths.

A petrol tanker ran out of control on June 29 exploding and killing at least 12.

### **Irish archaeologists strike**

Irish archaeologists employed by the IAC Archaeology consultancy working on the N22 motorway bypass scheme in Cork announced their intention to strike Thursday this week. The Unite union members accuse the company of refusing to negotiate over a pay claim.

### **Airline cabin crew across Europe announce strikes**

Cabin crew employed by Ryanair in Spain, Portugal and Belgium have announced a 48-hour strike beginning July 25, while cabin crew in Italy will hold a 24-hour strike July 25. They are protesting working terms and conditions. Ryanair is cancelling up to 600 flights over the two days due to the strike.

They want wages paid into bank accounts in their own country rather

than having to open an account in Ireland; an end to the pressure of pushing sales of snacks and scratch cards on flights; sick leave policy abolished that requires staff to report to work. Ground staff want permanent contracts and improved work conditions.

### **Ryanair pilots strike in Ireland**

Airline pilots working for the Dublin-based sector of Ryanair were due to strike Friday. The 120 pilots represented by the Irish Airline Pilots' Association, part of the Forsa trade union, voted by a 99 percent majority to take action.

They are protesting Ryanair's policy on base transfers, promotions and leave. Earlier in the week, Ryanair announced the cancellation of more than 20 flights to the UK in advance of the strike.

Ryanair expects to operate most of its scheduled flights, as around 250 pilots are employed by the company on a self-employed basis and are not involved in the strike.

A further 24-hour strike is planned for July 24

### **Strike by food delivery staff in French capital**

Food delivery workers employed by online platforms Deliveroo, Uber Eats and Foodora struck July 8 to July 15 in Paris—the week France won the World Cup.

The Independent Deliverymen's Collective are demanding an hourly minimum wage, guaranteed hours, a bonus for wet weather working and an end to the pay-by-delivery system.

### **Strike of Norwegian oil workers spreads**

On Monday, another 900 oil workers in the Norwegian Knarr offshore oil field joined the nearly 700 already on strike beginning July 10. Employers had ignored strikers' demands for a new pay offer. The Safe union may expand the strike further by calling all its 2,250 members out. The current strike is the largest in the Norwegian offshore oil industry since 2012.

### **Strike threat by Spanish airport baggage handlers**

The Spanish CCOO union has threatened to call out 60,000 baggage handlers and other staff at airports across Spain at the beginning of the August peak holiday period. For two years, there has been no progress in negotiations on pay, working time, breaks and promotional prospects. The union has also asked the Spanish workplace reconciliation service, Sima, to help negotiate to avoid the strike.

### **German supermarket staff strike**

Over 30,000 Verdi members at supermarkets of the German food and household retail chain, Metro's Real, came out on a one-day strike July 13. They were protesting a wage agreement imposing a near 25 percent wage cut for new hires. More than 1,000 strikers rallied outside the company's HQ in Dusseldorf. The union has threatened further strikes.

### **Harvest Store retail staff in Glasgow, Scotland walkout over surveillance**

Workers at the Harvest Store retail health food shop in Glasgow walked out on Monday after the discovery of 70 secret surveillance cameras throughout the store. Cameras were found in staff changing rooms. Police were called, but no action was taken.

Staff are owed wage arrears by the store, which only opened last month. Some workers have joined the BFAWU bakers' union.

### **Rail staff in southwest England to strike**

Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) at South Western Railway announced they will hold eight days of strikes on July 26, 28, 31, August 4, 11, 18, 31 and September 1. The announcement follows the breakdown of talks between the company and RMT.

Guards at a number of private rail franchises are involved in ongoing disputes over the extension of the use of Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains threatening 6,000 jobs and passenger safety. The RMT has limited action to regional, short-term strikes to isolate and dissipate struggles, while not fundamentally impacting rail operations.

A planned strike at Northern Rail for July 21 over DOO was called off. The RMT said Northern Rail has proposed "a process for reconvening talks around proposals to set up a joint working party..." to settle the dispute.

### **Eurostar rail staff to walk out in London**

Around 140 RMT members working for Eurostar at St Pancras are set to walkout on Saturday 28 July. St Pancras is the London terminal for Eurostar trains to the continent via the Channel Tunnel. Workers are protesting overcrowding on the platforms at busy periods, saying it is a safety hazard.

### **Workers in dispute at Luton and Manchester airports in the UK**

Baggage handlers at Luton airport in southern England are to strike from July 20 through to July 22. In Luton, members of the Unite union employed by Menzies Aviation are seeking an improved pay offer from the company. They accuse the company of reneging on previous agreements on working conditions.

Around 1,200 security staff at Manchester airport are considering strike action. The members of Unite are opposing changes to their rotas and staff shortages

### **UK education union staff to walk out**

Around 200 staff working for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) section of the National Education Union (NEU) were set to strike on Thursday. The NEU was formed last year with the fusion of the National Union of Teachers and the ATL.

The members of the GMB union are concerned that the planned restructuring is premised on a "highly controversial consultation exercise that would see job losses, increases in workload, changes to contracts, downgrading of posts and cuts in pay."

Members of Unite working for the NUT section want a strike ballot over the same issue.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**