

Biggest strike in Ryanair history; South African footwear strike continues

## Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

27 July 2018

### Ryanair hit by biggest strike in its history

Cabin crew and pilots at Ryanair, the Irish-based budget airline and Europe's largest carrier, struck this week for improved pay, seniority rights and consistent working hours.

Other demands included parity of conditions across the company's bases and access to a universal pension scheme. The strike is the largest in the company's 34-year history.

The members of the Irish Airline Pilots' Association struck July 24, in a third one-day action that forced the cancellation of 16 flights between Dublin and the UK. Another strike is set for August 3.

The company responded by threatening to transfer up to 20 percent of its Irish-based flights and six aircraft to Poland, underscoring the critical importance of a unified international movement amongst Ryanair workers. More than 100 pilots and 200 cabin crew positions are threatened by the move.

Cabin crew in Spain, Belgium and Portugal also struck July 25 and today. Six hundred flights have been cancelled, including 400 in Spain alone, in a coordinated action for better pay and conditions.

Cabin crew are seeking the right to sick pay, an end to victimisation for missing in-flight sales targets, pay equality across contracts, union recognition and an end to payroll anomalies. Workers across Europe are paid in Ireland and must open an Irish bank account. Demonstrations of cabin crew have taken place at Spanish airports.

### Irish pharmacy staff strike

Workers at 40 branches of pharmacy chain Lloyds are due to strike Friday for a seventh day of action. The Mandate trade union members are demanding union recognition and improved pay and conditions. They are paid on average 30 percent less than their counterparts at Boots. Some 270 out of 900 workers have joined Mandate.

Management of Dublin's Mill Shopping Centre previously banned picketing outside Lloyds.

### Irish ambulance staff threaten strike ballot

Ambulance workers in Ireland are considering a strike ballot over union recognition. Their employer, the Health Service Executive (HSE), refuses to deduct union dues from the wages of National Ambulance Representative Association (NASRA) members.

HSE has threatened NASRA with an injunction.

### Irish building workers protest in Dublin

A group of building workers protested last Friday at Hanover Quays, Dublin, over pay and conditions at Cairn Homes sites. The members of the Bricklayers and Allied Trade Union say some sites don't fully comply with the Sectoral Employment Order. Under it, workers' pay should be between €13.77 and €18.36 per hour, with an employer-employee contribution pension, death-in-service contribution, sick pay and other benefits.

### Unions sell out council workers dispute in Scotland

The GMB, Unison and Unite unions have called off a planned strike by East Dunbartonshire council waste workers against cuts in their terms and conditions.

The cuts include reduction of annual leave by three days, removal of "enhanced" overtime pay, cutting payments for unsocial hours and slashing terms for voluntary redundancy.

Workers planned to strike July 12-15 following a four-day strike in June, after a 93 percent strike vote. They have been on a work-to-rule since July 2.

In the July newsletter calling off the strike, Unison stated, "To mitigate the cuts to T&Cs [terms and conditions] we have offered a commitment to work jointly with management to identify cost efficiencies across services."

### UK Britvic soft drink workers prepare strike over plant closure

Workers making soft drinks for Britvic are due to strike to protest the

closure of their plant and loss of 242 jobs in Norwich, England. The General Municipal and Boilermakers union has limited the action to 18 days and the demands to increasing the size of redundancy payments.

To ensure that the strikes are as ineffective as possible, the GMB is staggering the action, with different sections of workers in the plant striking at different times. Technical operators will strike on August 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 and September 5; operators will strike on August 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 and September 6. Drive site staff will strike on August 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31 and September 7.

### **Paramedics strike in northwest England**

After an 84 percent vote, 160 ambulance staff in the counties of Lancashire, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire and Greater Manchester struck for 12 hours last Saturday.

The members of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers union are demanding job reevaluation.

### **Cleaners to strike for London living wage**

Cleaners at the Ministry of Justice and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council have voted to strike August 7-9 for the London Living Wage of £10.20 an hour. They are members of the United Voices of the World.

### **North Sea oil workers' strike against Total, causing price rise**

Oil rig workers employed by Total in the North Sea struck on Monday, bringing the Elgin-Franklin and Alwyn natural gas field areas to a halt. Gas production fell to 13 million cubic metres, and the gas price rose.

The Unite union said, "No further talks are planned at present," and invited management to "come back with a better offer." Further strikes are planned for August 6 and August 20, and 12-hour strikes on July 30 and August 13, along with an overtime ban.

Unite members have threatened to strike at the Equinor's Mariner oil platform.

Last week, the Safe union, representing Norwegian drilling workers, ended a 10-day strike over pay and conditions following state-appointed mediation.

### **Greek casino workers' 24-hour strike**

Workers at the casinos of Rio, Alexandroupolis, Corfu and Syros struck for 24 hours last weekend. The OSETYP union members are demanding back pay and benefits owed.

### **German care workers strike to demand parity**

Care workers at a clinic in the German town of Bad Langensalza are on indefinite strike after a 95 percent vote to demand improvements in their pay and conditions. The clinic is owned by the French multinational ORPEA.

The company fired two Verdi union members and locked out five others.

### **French farmers' protest stops Tour de France**

Police tear-gassed French farmers who temporarily halted the Tour de France on Tuesday. Many, including competing cyclists, had to wash their eyes with water. The police also manhandled protesters.

The French government and European Union plan to cut the number of areas classed as disadvantaged that qualify for financial aid. Many farmers fear they will go out of business.

The farmers blocked the cycle route for 15 minutes with hay bales and tractors at stage 16 of the race between Carcassonne and Bagnères-de-Luchon.

### **Teachers to strike in Cyprus**

State school teachers in Cyprus are to strike in September against cost-cutting measures, including an increase in teaching hours.

Education Minister Costas Hambiaouris ended the reduction in teaching hours for teachers after eight years' service. Teachers had a maximum reduction of six hours after 20 years' experience.

The minister also removed the requirement that union leaders be paid from state funds to carry out union activities without working as teachers. Unions have planned a demonstration for August 28.

### **Iranian railway workers take over headquarters in Tabriz**

Iranian railway maintenance workers in the northwest province of Azerbaijan have occupied rail headquarters in Tabriz to demand back pay and oppose the worsening of their terms of employment.

They have not been paid since April and are suffering cutbacks. Their insurance has been reduced after management changed the rating level of danger in their work. Most have been agency workers for the last 10 years.

### **UN staff protest against casualisation of workforce in Gaza Strip**

Members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) held a protest in the Gaza Strip to oppose the suspension of work contracts for 951 employees.

UNWRA ended the jobs of 13 percent of its emergency programme workers, transferred 57 percent into part-time contracts, and moved the rest into temporary contracts lasting only until later this year. The UN is breaking up operations to help Palestinian refugees at a time when they are under siege by Israel as never before.

## **South African footwear workers' strike continues**

Ten thousand footwear industry employees in South Africa are continuing their two-week long strike, with further factories closing.

The employers are sticking to their final offer of a 6.25 percent pay rise. The members of the National Union of Leather and Allied Workers (NULAW) are demanding a 9 percent pay increase.

The NULAW claims that individual companies in the Southern African Footwear and Leather Industries Association (SAFLIA) are rejecting an industry-wide settlement.

The SAFLIA claims the industry contracted for the first time since 2011 by 17 percent last year.

## **Liberian steel workers take wildcat action**

Liberian workers embarked on a wildcat strike this week at the Mountgangra and Torkadeh mining company over unfair labour practices. The plant is owned by Arcelormittal steel.

The "stay at home" action is to avoid a confrontation with company police, with workers fearing they will be shot with live ammunition.

Workers want better housing and medical provision for themselves and their families, a guaranteed payment of half a US dollar a day lunch money and an end to the "zero week"—12 hours' work for 8 hours' pay.

## **Union sells out Ethiopian train drivers strike**

Around 100 Ethiopian train operators struck for 24 hours July 18 at the Addis Ababa Light Railway Transit (AA-LRT).

Workers demanded a wage increase, improved travel allowance, telephones, change in shift times, the renewal of their dormitories and better meals.

The union ended the action claiming many of the demands were met.

However, the CEO of AA-LRT said, "Some of the complaints could not be resolved within a short period, such as installing new dormitories, and the provision of telephone allowances as a lot of money is needed." He added, "salary increments require structural adjustments."

## **Kenyan nurses and teachers threaten strike**

Health workers at Kenya National Hospital are threatening to resume strike action on August 6 over non-payment of allowances.

The members of the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers ended a previous strike over the same issue in May 2017.

Management have avoided meetings with the unions.

Members of the Kenyan National Union of Teachers are also threatening action over performance appraisals on the Internet. Teachers must travel miles to gain access, as schools are not online.

Appraisals are used by the Teachers Service Commission to humiliate and bully teachers.

## **Nigerian polytechnic staff strike spreads over unpaid wages**

Polytechnic colleges across the Nigeria's Oyo state are striking over unpaid wages. At the Ibarapa Polytechnic in Eruwa, Oyo State, workers struck last week over unpaid wages of up to 24 months and other entitlements.

Staff locked the college gates and turned students away from lectures.

The Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Polytechnics and Non-Academic Staff Union said the strike is indefinite.

Other colleges on strike are the College of Agriculture and Technology in Igbo, College of Education in Lanlate, and Emmanuel Alayande College of Education in Oyo, along with Oke Ogun Polytechnic, Saki and Eruwa Polytechnic.

## **South African rail workers vote to strike over wage claim**

Workers at Gautrain rail in Pretoria and Johannesburg have voted to strike on July 30 for a 10 percent wage increase.

The United National Transport Union members also want overtime payments for night working, increases in housing and travel allowances, an R20,000 bonus and a 55/45 percent employee/employer medical fund. The employers are offering a wage increase of 8.5 percent.

## **Malawi hospital staff told there is no money for wages**

Newly recruited hospital staff are on a go slow at the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi, demanding unpaid wages. The 33 nurses and midwifery technicians say comparable staff recruited at the same time at other hospitals have been paid.

The new staff have gone three months without pay, cannot subsist and do not have the fare to travel to the hospital. Hospital management claims there is no money for pay.



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