

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

4 August 2018

Europe

affecting no more than one flight.

Spanish miners strike for hazard pay in Seville

Eighty-five percent of the 800 workers at First Quantum Mineral's Cobre Las Cruces mine in Spain went on a four-day strike last week to demand payment of "toxic bonuses" (hazard pay).

The 946-hectare mine straddles the municipalities of Gerena, Guillena and Salteras, located in the southern Spanish province of Seville. Reserves are estimated at 17.6 million tonnes of copper.

Taxi drivers strike in Spain

Spanish taxi drivers are continuing strikes in Barcelona, Madrid and other cities, claiming unfair competition from app services like Uber or Cabify.

In Barcelona, the drivers blocked traffic in the city center and on access roads. In Madrid, strikers walked out of the airport and train station.

Irish pharmacy workers strike over pay, conditions and job security

Workers at Lloyds pharmacies in Dublin went on strike last Friday for the seventh time over pay, conditions and job security.

The 270 Mandate union members voted by 96 percent to strike for incremental pay scales and a sick pay scheme, security of hours and the elimination of zero-hours contracts, as well as improvements in annual leave and public holiday premiums.

About 160 workers attended a general union meeting and staged a protest at the Lloyds head office.

Air traffic controllers strike in Malta, employer responds with lockout

Air traffic controllers in Malta, who took strike action on July 25 for a 5 percent pay increase, were locked out by Air Malta. Four flights had to be delayed.

The union stressed its intention is to keep action to a minimum,

Staff at Eiffel Tower, France to strike against new ticket system

Workers at the Eiffel Tower in Paris are preparing to strike to oppose a new ticket system that is causing long queues.

Using new technology to cut jobs, management are selling up to half the daily tickets in advance online. The ticket assigns the lift to be used, which "creates lines that are at times monstrous and often lopsided," said the CGT trade union.

London Underground transport workers to strike, rail workers strike

London Underground workers at the Ruislip depot are to strike for 12 hours on both Friday and Sunday in a dispute over pay parity and payments for train preparation.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) has limited the strike to one depot and set the times to cause the minimum of disruption, with the action on Friday to start at 7 p.m. after the end of rush hour.

RMT members at Eurostar St Pancras struck for 24 hours last Saturday over dangerous overcrowding on the platform, while guards took action over Driver Only Operated trains (DOO) at South Western Railway. DOO threatens passenger safety and 6,000 jobs among guards nationally.

The RMT are in talks over DOO with Merseyrail at the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). They reached a deal with Greater Anglia which has not been made public and have called off planned strikes over DOO at Arriva Rail North in order to enter talks with the company.

The RMT opposes uniting the widespread opposition to DOO and in doing so enforces the anti-union laws.

Care workers in Birmingham, UK, strike as cuts in hours threaten services and pay

Around 285 care workers in the UK's second largest city, Birmingham, struck Tuesday and Wednesday against changes cutting their working hours from 36.5 to as little as 14. The income loss would reduce them to poverty.

Birmingham's Labour Party majority council hopes to save £2 million from the cuts to its home enablement service. The service, which provides

help after hospital or recovering from an illness or injury, has already been cut by 48 percent.

A striking mother of four told the media, "I work evenings and I would lose four hours from my 18 hours, which is a lot. You might not even get the hours you are asking for."

A further 13 strikes are planned by September 1.

Tram drivers and conductors in Sheffield, England set for eight days of strikes, as union prepares sellout

Around 200 tram drivers and conductors in Sheffield, UK are to hold another eight days of strikes to demand a pay rise. The strike days are 18, 20, 22, 28 and 30 August, as well as 1 September. There will also be a 48-hour strike on 24 August. All strikes will start at 01.00.

Workers rejected the latest three-year pay offer, said to be worth just 26p an hour, by a large majority. The hourly rate for Sheffield conductors is £9.40 an hour, and for drivers £11.78 (£18,000 and £23,000 a year).

The Unite union is calling for talks at the ACAS arbitration service, with no response from employer Stagecoach.

Manchester Metrolink tram drivers are also balloting for strike action over pay, with the ballot closing August 9.

Middle East

Protests continue in Gaza against cuts to United Nations Relief and Works Agency budget

Workers continued their sit-in protest at the Gaza headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) against budget cuts. The US has halved its aid budget to UNRWA in lockstep with the Israeli government blockade.

One million people rely on help from UNRWA.

Workers have threatened strikes in response to UNRWA's announcement of 125 immediate job losses, 570 full-time jobs made part-time until the end of the year, and a further 270 sackings at the end of the year. A worker tried to set fire to himself in desperation.

Thirteen thousand are planning to demonstrate, joining the Great March of Return protests on the border with Israel.

Pharmaceutical workers in Jordan strike for 10 days over pay and conditions

A strike by 850 workers employed by the Jordanian health products company Dar Al Dawa has been called off by the union. The action began July 24 with workers demanding improved pay and conditions, which have only been partially achieved.

Tunisian airport workers' strike over government cuts called off by union

A planned strike by Tunisian airport workers on August 1 and 2 to

oppose the ripping up of their terms and conditions has been called off by the union that called it.

The union claimed the government had met most of their demands, without giving further details.

Tunisia depends on its tourist sector to bring in foreign currency. It attracted over 3.2 million tourists between 1 January and 30 June, up by more than 25 percent since last year. The amount of money coming in as a result has increased by 40 percent and now stands at \$522 million.

The government is implementing IMF austerity.

Africa

South African footwear strike continues

Members of the National Union of Leather and Allied Workers are into the third week of a strike for a 9 percent pay increase. The Southern African Footwear and Leather Industry Association has increased its offer by a derisory 0.5 percent.

Both union and employers are turning to South Africa's Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration to settle the dispute.

The 10,000 workers are striking for a 9.5 percent wage increase, while employers have offered 6.5 percent. The unions have charged intimidation after an incident where shots were fired by a supervisory employee at a gathering of striking workers.

Namibian retail workers protest against Shoprite

Namibian retail workers were planning a boycott of stores across the country and demonstrations yesterday. They are being sued by their employer, Shoprite, for loss of earnings, due to an unofficial strike in 2015 over pay and conditions.

Shoprite wants N4.5 million from 93 of its workers who earn less than N2,000 a month. The company retails in 15 African countries with 143,000 employees.

Workers at the company are represented by a firm of pro-bono lawyers.

Last year Shoprite used armed security guards to protect scab workers breaking a strike over wages and conditions with its South African workforce, injuring many.

Train maintenance workers in Gauteng, South Africa, down tools

Train operations throughout Gauteng, South Africa halted Monday as workers downed tools. Members of the United National Transport Union (UNTU) are demanding a 10 percent pay increase, R1,600 housing and R800 transport allowances, a 55 percent company paid medical contribution and an end of the year bonus of R20,000.

Employer Bombela is offering an 8.6 percent pay increase and a R1,700 increase in the minimum wage with no bonus. The company has refused UNTU's call to open its books to assess the affordability of the claim.

Workers say they sleep over on the job in containers because they cannot afford upmarket rents or the travel costs.

South African power workers take wildcat action over bonus payments

Power workers in South Africa are striking in several Eskom power plants over bonus payments. The National Union of Mineworkers says its members are taking unofficial action.

Eskom has offered a 7 percent pay increase but refuses to pay a bonus.

Power cuts were expected from Tuesday between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., and 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Eskom is mobilising the South African Police Service to threaten pickets, accusing workers of stopping coal deliveries to power stations and intimidating drivers.

Kenyan doctors and nurses to strike over hardship allowance

Members of the Kenya National Union of Nurses and the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Union in Elgeyo Marakwet county are threatening to strike if hardship allowances are not re-instated.

The allowances for 18 workers were arbitrarily scrapped by the Department of Health (DoH), claiming they are not eligible because the county they are training in is not a hardship area.

The DoH has been given until next Monday to pay up or the hospitals will be paralysed.

Nigerian oil workers union sabotage strike

On Wednesday, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers of Nigeria suspended strike action that had begun Saturday in Akwa Ibom State for the reinstatement of 300 sacked workers.

The union acquiesced to the request of the Director-General of the Department of State Security Service, even though the country only had seven days energy supplies left.

The dispute has been ongoing for years as the offshore oil maintenance companies act outside the country's labour laws.



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