

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

Railworkers strike in UK while Iranian rail strike continues

10 August 2018

Europe

UK rail strikes at Ruislip and South West Rail

Railworkers at the London Underground depot in Ruislip will take further action with 48-hour strikes planned for August 22 and 24. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members are seeking pay parity and payments for train preparation. The depot is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the fleet of London Underground engineering trains.

RMT guards at South Western Rail are continuing strikes in opposition to the company's intention to extend the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains, threatening 6,000 jobs and passenger safety. A 24-hour strike is due to begin tomorrow with another on August 18 and a 48-hour stoppage August 31.

The RMT opposes uniting the widespread opposition to DOO and has reached a deal with Greater Anglia and other private rail franchises and called off planned strikes at Arriva Rail North.

Cleaners strike in UK capital

Cleaners employed to clean Ministry of Justice (MoJ) buildings in London and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) council began a three-day strike Tuesday.

Members of the United Voices of the World (UVW) trade union mounted picket lines at five sites across the capital. Cleaners at MoJ are employed by service provider Amey and those at RBKC by service provider OCS. Both companies pay the mainly migrant workforce the minimum wage of £7.83 an hour. The cleaners demand the London Living Wage of £10.20 an hour and sick pay. Many work two or three jobs to survive in the capital.

RBKC said it might return its cleaning services to in-house provision, subject to review.

Cleaners at health firm HCA UK, which runs private hospitals and medical centres at eight London sites, announced a coordinated strike later this month over low pay and other issues.

Strike by UK offshore oil workers

Oil platform workers employed by French energy company Total on three platforms off the Scottish coast held a 24-hour strike on Monday.

The Unite union members employed on the Alwyn, Elgin and Dunbar platforms struck following Total's proposals to change the work rota from two to three weeks on and three weeks off, plus a pay rise. They will hold a 12-hour strike on August 13 and a 24-hour strike on August 20.

Strike of paramedics in northwest England

Paramedics working for the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) in England began a 26-hour strike 6 a.m. August 5.

The strike affected ambulance services in Merseyside, Manchester, Lancashire and other areas. The members of the GMB union, who represent 25 percent of NWAS staff, voted more than 80 percent for action for improved pay.

Strike at Royal Mail in Plymouth, England

Royal Mail staff at the West Park delivery office in Plymouth, England walked out in wildcat action on Saturday. They were protesting bullying and harassment by management. The action affected deliveries in the city.

Overtime ban by brewery workers in northern England

Staff at Budweiser's brewery in Samlesbury, near Preston, Lancashire, are due to begin an indefinite overtime ban on Monday. The members of the GMB union are demanding the reinstatement of a sacked colleague who raised health and safety issues over a newly introduced process.

Strike of refuse workers in Ghent, Belgium

Refuse collectors at waste management company Ivago in the Belgian city of Ghent struck Monday. The workers in three unions want the right to stop work half an hour earlier if the temperature is above 25 degrees

and an hour earlier if it is above 30. They accuse management of understating temperature readings. Other issues include provision of water and sunblock when working in hot sunny conditions.

The workers say they are overworked because of staff shortages when workers take annual leave. In the summer holiday period the crews normally do not collect glass and paper to lighten the load, but this year no concession has been made.

Protest of Ukrainian miners

Miners from the Luhansk region of Ukraine held a protest August 3 outside the Ministry of Energy and Coal in Kiev against wage arrears owed going back several months.

Portuguese rail union announces strike over staff shortages

Fectrans, the main Portuguese rail union, announced it is launching a campaign against staff shortages and for increased investment in Portugal's rail system. It intends to carry out protests from September 20, culminating in a strike October 3 to highlight underinvestment.

Middle East

Iranian rail workers continue strike

Iranian rail workers on strike since July 20 have vowed to continue striking. Around 7,000 workers responsible for maintaining rail tracks are demanding overdue wages and calling for permanent contracts, insurance benefits and the right to form a union. The strikers have held protests across the country.

In a separate long-running dispute, hundreds of workers at the Haf Tapeh sugar cane mill protested for a second day Saturday, also demanding payment of wage arrears and against the privatization of the plant.

Africa

Teachers strike in Lesotho, South Africa

Lesotho teachers began a month-long national strike on August 3 for a wage increase and improved working conditions. They have been in negotiations with ministers over a long period to no avail.

They are demanding payment of agreed salary scales and a performance-based contract going back to 2009.

The Education and Training minister has declared the strike by members of the Lesotho Teachers Association, the Lesotho Teachers Trade Union and the Lesotho Schools Principals Association illegal. The unions have responded by calling for picketing at education offices across the country.

National Union of Leather and Allied Workers sells out footwear

strike in South Africa

The National Union of Leather and Allied Workers (NULAW) has ended a strike by its members involved in footwear manufacturing.

Members of NULAW have been striking for higher wages since July 9, along with members of the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU).

SACTWU General Secretary Andre Kriel said, "We've received informal information that employers have now revised their information upwards and they've put up a new settlement offer on the table," adding that the union is waiting for a formal offer to communicate to workers.

The unions originally called for a 9.5 percent wage increase, against the South African Footwear and Leather Industry Association offer of 6.5 percent. NULAW accepted a lower pay package agreement to end the strike, with a final settlement demand of a 7.5 percent increase in wages and an extension of the scope of family responsibility leave to cover spouses in the event of sickness.

During the dispute, shots were fired at strikers by a supervisor.

Nigerian workers defrauded of wages at Athletics championship event

Hundreds of Nigerian workers previously employed at the Stephen Keshi Stadium demonstrated on the streets of Asaba in Delta State Monday.

Soldiers and police removed the protesters from the roads they were blocking.

Guards and other low-paid workers employed last week for the 21st African Senior Athletics Championship protested the non-payment of wages by the stadium's Local Organizing Committee.

They were promised N15000 for the five-day event (US \$41) for workdays starting at 5:30 a.m. and finishing at 8:30 p.m., after the VIP's had vacated the stadium.

Kenyan trade union agrees deal to split hospital strikers

Kenyan hospital workers at the Kenyatta National Hospital struck Monday morning over allowances after a strike notice expired August 5.

Members of the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational, Institutions and Hospital Workers were confronted by teargas lobbing police over the six-hour strike.

The union ended the strike with a fudged deal over a revised housing allowance affecting only part of the 4,700 workers—to be paid in September. The other strikers not affected by housing allowances were ordered back to work by the Labour courts for taking illegal secondary action.

Nurses have also threatened to strike from August 1 in Tharaka-Nithi County, if they do not get paid leave and their uniform allowances.

South African platinum miners threaten strike over job losses

Members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) of South Africa have threatened to strike if Impala Platinum

(Implats) sheds 13,400 jobs.

Implats is closing five of its Rustenburg shafts because they have lost money over the last six years.

South Africa's unemployment figures stand at record levels of over 10 million.

South African Gautrain engineers continue strike over wages deal

Gautrain employees are continuing their 10-day-old strike after the intervention by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration collapsed.

The UNTU union reduced its demands to a 9 percent wage increase, R1,400 housing allowance and a one-off bonus of R15,000, from 10 percent, R16,000 and R20,000 respectively.

Workers rejected a new offer by employer Bombela put to them by their union because it was over three years, insisting on their original demand of a one-year deal.

The train engineers also want an increase in nightshift allowance, a transport subsidy and a jointly funded medical scheme—demands that the union has dropped.

South African licensing workers out on strike for three weeks

Employees at South Africa's Department of Licensing and Card Account have been on strike for three weeks to demand full-time employment.

Some workers had been at the company for 20 years and were promised full-time work when the Department of Transport took over three years ago.

No licences, including for pilots, have been issued over the period.

A workers' spokesman said no one will receive a licence until they get full employment and all associated benefits.

Harare civil servants in Zimbabwe threaten strike over unpaid wages

Members of the Zimbabwe Municipal Workers Union (ZMWU) in Harare are considering industrial action if a backlog of wages is not paid. Harare's City Council have not paid their employees for the last four months.

ZMWU is seeking to head off a strike, with a spokesman declaring, “[W]orkers' leaders have been fighting very hard to avoid such action. Harare is the window to the nation and any disruptions of services would be averse to the trajectory the new dispensation has taken.” The new dispensation refers to the Mnangagwa government installed by last November's coup.

Liberia ArcelorMittal miners and train drivers resume strikes

Mineworkers and train operators employed by ArcelorMittal in Liberia resumed industrial action after their claims were denied by the company

and the government.

Operations at the Yekepa mine in Nimba County were brought to a standstill when workers walked out for the second time last week. They want work security, the cancellation of the “zero week” and restoration of leave with benefits.

The company says the strike is unofficial because workers had left the union en masse. ArcelorMittal said they would not negotiate without a union.

ArcelorMittal train drivers, who transport workers and materials from the north and south of the country, returned to striking for better housing and medical provision for them and their families, half a US dollar a day lunch money and an end to the zero week—meaning 12 hours work for eight hours pay.

ArcelorMittal is the largest steel and mining corporation in the world. It mines iron ore on Liberia's northern border with the Ivory Coast then transports it by a purpose-built railroad to its west coast.



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