

Rail staff at UK rail concessions plan further strikes

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

24 August 2018

The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

## Rail staff at UK rail concessions plan further strikes

Rail guards working for Arriva Rail North are to hold another six strikes. They are scheduled to go out for 24 hours on August 25, September 1 and September 8.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) has extended the action with a further three dates set for strike action on successive Saturdays from September 15.

The action is over opposition to plans to introduce Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains, downgrading the role of the guard with the ultimate aim of eliminating thousands of jobs. Members voted to strike as part of a dispute that has been going on over a year.

The RMT has limited action to regional, short-term strikes to isolate and dissipate struggles, not fundamentally affect rail operations. It has sealed deals with some private rail franchises such as ScotRail and Greater Anglia over DOO.

RMT members at South Western Railway are to strike for two days over the issue beginning August 31. It will be the fifth set of strikes since July, with two more strikes scheduled for September 8 and 15.

## UK: Liverpool airport staff strike

Around 80 staff at Liverpool John Lennon airport were set to strike beginning 7pm on Thursday until 7am on Saturday. The staff are responsible for rescue and fire fighting, engineering and driver operations, bird control and staffing the control room.

The GMB union members are taking action in protest of a below-inflation pay rise of two percent that is being offered. They workers are pushing for a 3.6 percent pay rise.

## Further strike by UK Total offshore oil workers

Oil platform workers employed by French energy company Total on three platforms off the Scottish coast held a further strike Monday in a

fifth round of strike action. Further strike dates have been set for September 3 and 17.

The Unite union members on the Alwyn, Elgin and Dunbar platforms are opposing Total's proposed changes to the current work rotation pattern from two weeks to three weeks on and three weeks off. They are also seeking a pay rise.

## Council staff in Glasgow, Scotland to be balloted for strike

Nearly 5,000 members of the Unison union, employed in the education and care departments at Glasgow city council, are to be balloted for a possible strike. The union accuses the council of failing to meet commitments over equal pay. The ballot result is expected on September 18.

## Strike by Irish pharmacy workers continues

Pharmacists at 40 British-owned Lloyds Pharmacy stores across Ireland struck last Saturday, the eighth such strike.

Around 270 staff represented by the Mandate union are protesting zero hour contracts and demanding increased pay and an enhanced sick pay scheme. Lloyds employs around 800 staff in nearly 90 stores in Ireland. Demonstrations took place outside the pharmacies in support of the strikers, including at the 20 stores in Dublin. A ninth strike is planned for this weekend.

## Strike threat by Dutch airline pilots

Pilots in Holland working for the Dutch arm of Air France-KLM are threatening to strike. They are demanding the company take on more pilots to ease the pressure on existing pilots by giving them more time between flights to recuperate.

They rejected the company's offer made last week and threatened to strike in four weeks if the company did not respond with an improved offer.

## **Portuguese rail maintenance workers strike**

Workers maintaining the Portuguese high-speed rail system struck on Saturday. The National Independent Union of Railways members are protesting the lack of recruitment that has led to staff shortages.

## **Canary Island hotel workers strike**

Housekeeping and valet staff at the Hotel Be Live Experience in the Spanish Canary Island of Lanzarote held a strike August 17. The workers are members of the CC OO union and are protesting the outsourcing of hotel jobs and their precarious nature.

Their jobs were outsourced by the hotel to the service contractor Gesner S. L. who then cut wages by around 40 percent. After protests, Gesner increased their wages by €500 but cut the number of jobs, increased the workload and extended the working day. Workers report they have to clean up to 26 rooms a day as well as perform other related duties. As a consequence they end up working up to 10 hours without taking meal breaks.

## **Security guards at Dutch airport step up campaign**

Security guards at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam are holding 15-minute strikes, up to five times a day, in their campaign for a three percent pay rise and increased time off between shifts.

Represented by the FNV and CNV unions, they are proposing to hold a 24-hour strike on September 4. More than 4,000 security staff at Schiphol are expected to take part in the strike. Security staff at other sites are due to strike the same day but the unions have not announced which sites will be hit.

## **Greek ferry workers to strike**

Greek ferry workers are due to hold a 24-hour strike on September 3. The members of the PNO union are seeking a pay rise and tax concessions. If the strike goes ahead, it is expected to affect around 180,000 passengers.

## **Iranian sugar workers continue strike**

Workers at the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane plant began a strike on Saturday. The Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Workers' Union members held protests at the plant main gate and security office. They have been involved in a long-standing dispute over the non-payment of wages.

## **Lesotho workers protests as employers block government minimum wage**

The new minimum wage approved by Lesotho's government has been postponed by court order. The postponement brought angry workers on to the streets, particularly in the textile areas, blockading roads.

Police representatives said two people were injured in Maputsoe "and it is yet to be established whether they were shot by police with rubber bullets because things had really gone out of hand."

Mass demonstrations had taken place in June over a campaign for a general increase of 15 percent for all workers.

Wages in the textile industry average around M1,200 whereas the minimum wage is set at M2,000. Industry representatives oppose what is regarded as a 62 percent wage increase in their wage bill. The minimum wage was to be backdated to April 1 this year.

A stay on the minimum wage was brought forward by the employers' organisation, Associations of Lesotho Employers (ALE), and the Lesotho Textile Exporters Association (LTEA).

## **South African gold miners demand pay and safety increases**

The South African National Union of Mineworkers at Harmony Gold, Matlosana district, is threatening to strike over safety issues and a pay demand.

The strike is predicated on the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) providing a certificate to strike.

Other mining unions, throughout South Africa, are negotiating separately with Minerals Council (MC) representatives.

The MC was called the Chamber of Mines (CM) until May this year. Transition to the MC has seen the breakup up of the mines joint national negotiating body, which the mining unions committed to oppose.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) claim that safety at the mine has deteriorated since Harmony took over from Anglo Gold Ashanti.

## **South African miners union threatens to strike for a year**

The Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) in South Africa is threatening to strike for a year. AMCU threatened the action to protest the destruction of 13,400 jobs at Impala Platinum.

The job losses in mining are occurring while what is referred to as a bloodbath of jobs is taking place across South Africa. A constitutional court ruling has enforced a "deemed" rule from 2015 to be implemented. The rule requires industry to provide equal conditions to agency workers as to full-time employees after a three-month period of continuous work for the same employer.

Many multinationals and other companies in South Africa employ the majority of their workers on agency contracts. Enforcement of the ruling is causing companies to restructure production, shedding thousands of workers.

## **South Africa Eskom lower tier managers demand wage negotiations**

Eskom South Africa's power generating company is facing a further wage claim from its managerial staff.

Members of the Management, Professional and Specialists (MPS) won their case at CCMA to be a part of the bargaining forum structure, and are

claiming the same demands as the other unions.

MPS is a category below middle management and it is not a trade union. Union membership among managers at this level is not supported by the company, and Eskom is appealing the labour court's decision on that premise.

Managers are demanding a 7.5 percent wage increases for 2018, 7 percent for 2019 and 2020, a R10,000 one-off payment and a housing allowance increase based on the consumer price index.

### **South African court ruling on casuals sparks strikes**

Workers at ITB Plastics South Africa are striking for permanent employment and opposition to toilet surveillance. The company, meanwhile, called out the police and appealed to the Labour Courts for the action to be made illegal.

In response, Police arrested 20 workers. This took place, according to the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), under conditions of a peaceful picket line. The Labour Court, however, refused to ban the strike.

Workers are striking in light of the constitutional court ruling that labour agency workers get the same rights as full-time employees after three months of continuous employment.

### **Union sell-out of South African seafood process workers**

South African seafood production workers went on strike earlier this month at Blue Ocean Mussels. The 50 women workers demanded a 12 percent wage increase, rejecting a company offer of 4.5 percent.

Within days of the strike beginning, the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) signalled they would accept a lower pay deal than 12 percent. The August 10 *Cape Times* cited FAWU shop steward Misty Don, who said, "Workers were unhappy because the company bought new machinery and a new freezer, which cost millions. We will not give up and are willing to accept an 8 percent increase".

### **Nigerian Cross River State poly unions on fourth warning strike**

Nigerian college employees protested at Cross River State Government House over the non-implementation of a wage structure on Monday. The protest was followed by a three-day warning strike. The college has been brought to a standstill.

The Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Polytechnics want the agreed 2011 wage structure implemented, to bring them in line with all other Tertiary institutions in the state.

### **Edo State Nigeria teachers threaten to strike over wages and conditions**

Teachers in Nigeria's Edo State primary and secondary schools are

threatening to strike in a few weeks.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) said that unless state governors pay a backlog of wages, plus other demands, a strike would take place. Among the demands of employees is an increase in teachers' numbers by around 2,000.

Edo State governors were given 21 days to pay the wages or schools would be halted, jeopardising the new school year that starts in September.

### **Nigerian local government workers prepare strike over unpaid wages**

Nigerian local government workers have issued a strike notice in Ekiti State, to be implemented Thursday, if outstanding wages are not paid. The state owes its civil servants seven months back wages.



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