

Croatian shipbuilders end strike; Swaziland police fire on women textile workers

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

7 September 2018

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

Europe

Striking Croatian shipbuilders return to work

The 4,500 striking shipbuilders working for the Uljanik yard returned to work Monday. They had been striking for two weeks over non-payment of wages.

The Croatian government, which has a 25 percent share in the company, intervened to cover the wage arrears.

The struggle of the shipbuilders received support from local people who joined marches and protests organised by the strikers.

The workers also demanded the resignation of the president of the management board, who they accused of bringing about the financial crisis. He resigned his position last week. However, the financial crisis remains, and a restructuring plan is awaiting the perusal of the European Commission while a search has begun for a private investor to come in.

French unions propose autumn strike

The General Confederation of Labour together with the Force Ouvrière and student unions have issued a call for a strike on October 9. They issued the call in opposition to French President Macron's "ideological policies targeting the destruction of our social model, favouring notably the explosion of inequality and the breaking of collective rights."

The unions view the strike as an exercise in letting off steam with no perspective to oppose Macron's continuing attacks. Despite the opposition by striking rail workers this year opposing the privatization of the state-owned SNCF Rail Company and destruction of conditions, the unions allowed the French government to push through its plans.

Unions representing Air France employees have called for strikes in the autumn but have not set any dates for action. The union bureaucracy is mounting a nationalist campaign of opposition to the appointment of a Canadian as chief CEO of Air France.

Strike by security staff at Dutch airport called off

A planned strike by around 4,000 security staff at Schiphol airport in Holland, due to have taken place on Monday, was called off by the three unions representing the staff. The unions are De Unie Security, FNV and CNV.

Security staff were seeking a three percent pay rise and more time off between shifts.

The unions and management agreed a deal giving a one-off €700 payment plus a five percent pay rise for 2019 and 2020 as well as an agreement on shorter working hours.

Further strikes by Irish pharmacy staff

Around 200 staff working for the Lloyds Pharmacy chain in Ireland came out on strike on Monday and Tuesday. The members of the Mandate union are seeking union recognition, a pay increase, an improved sick pay scheme and an end to zero-hour contracts. The strike led to the closure of nine pharmacies in Dublin with another around 30 outlets partially affected by the strike.

Mandate represents around a third of the more than 900 employees at Lloyds Pharmacy. In spite of a recommendation by the Labour Court that Lloyds recognize Mandate, it has refused to do so.

The company has brought in a severance scheme as it seeks to reduce staff numbers through voluntary redundancies.

Further strikes are planned for the first three days of October and the first three days of November, as well as November 5.

UK rail strikes continue

Rail conductors working for Arriva Rail North are due to hold a 24-hour strike Saturday, with three further 24-hour strikes planned for the next three weekends. It is the latest strike in a series of strikes over the last year against plans by the private rail franchises to extend the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains.

Conductors working for South Western Railway are also due to hold a 24-hour strike on Saturday, with a further strike planned for next weekend over DOO.

The conductors are members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT). The RMT has signed a deal with Merseyrail, whereby a new fleet of trains due to come into service in 2021 will operate with a form of DOO, as drivers will be responsible for closing train doors, and not the

guard.

The RMT said that the government mediation service ACAS brokered a deal allowing a second member of staff on the train. The press release notes that the second member of staff will be financed partly by productivity agreements between the RMT and Merseyrail.

The RMT has limited action to regional, short-term strikes to isolate and dissipate struggles, without fundamentally affecting rail operations. It has also sealed deals with some private rail franchises such as ScotRail and Greater Anglia over DOO.

Strike of Greek ferry workers

Greek ferry crew workers represented by the PNO union struck on Monday to demand a five percent pay increase following eight years of a pay freeze.

It affected nearly 200,000 tourists who had booked trips to and from the many Greek islands. Following a two percent pay rise offer, the PNO ordered its members back to work during the day on Tuesday.

UK bus workers vote for strike against low pay

Around 150 bus drivers working for the Trentbarton bus company operated by the Wellgrade Group in the East Midlands have voted by a 70 percent majority to strike. The members of Unite will strike on September 10 to be followed by further action on September 17 and 24, with more stoppages planned for October and November.

They have rejected a 2.5 percent pay rise offer. Around 450 Unite members at another Wellgrade subsidiary, the Trent Motor Traction Company, have also rejected the 2.5 percent offer and may push for a vote.

In an indictment of its own role, Unite noted in a press release that some of the bus drivers have had to resort to food bank usage because of low pay.

Further strikes planned by staff at Liverpool John Lennon airport

Around 80 staff at John Lennon airport in northwest England have announced they will strike later this month.

The GMB union members will strike on September 13, 19, 24 and 26 with further dates in October planned. The workers are responsible for rescue and fire fighting, control room operations, engineering and driver operations. They previously held a 36-hour strike at the end of August.

Staff voted by a near 70 percent majority to reject management's latest pay offer of a 2.2 percent pay offer plus a one-off £150 lump sum. This was an increase on their initial offer of two percent. The union has dropped its claim for a 3.6 percent rise down to three percent.

Strike of council staff in Scotland announced

Council staff working for East Dunbartonshire council in Scotland are to

strike on September 12. The members of the Unison, Unite and GMB unions have called the strike over a range of issues including annual leave, overtime pay and unsocial hour's payments.

If it goes ahead the strike will hit schools, refuse bin collections and homecare services. The unions have stressed they are open to further discussions to avert the strike.

UK: Birmingham care workers continue struggle

Around 250 care workers employed by Labour Party controlled Birmingham City Council completed a five-day strike last week bringing the total days of strike to 17 so far. The Unison union members are set to walk out for a further five days on September 24 and again on October 5.

They work for the enablement team offering support to people discharged from hospital to adjust to life back in their own homes.

Birmingham council is seeking to cut the team's budget by £2 million. To do this, the council wants to cut the workforce. In January, at the beginning of the dispute, it sought to get rid of around 40 percent of the workforce and in the course of the dispute has cut the workforce by nearly 50 percent. It also wants to cut working hours and outsource parts of its service.

Strike by UK crane assemblers continues

Thirty construction crane assemblers working for the Liebherr Group in Sunderland in northeast England are continuing their programme of strikes.

Their latest two-day action by the Unite members was due to begin yesterday. Further action is planned in October.

They are protesting an inadequate pay offer, with the latest offer by the company a 3.2 percent pay rise plus an extra day's paid leave at Christmas or a straight 3.3 percent pay rise.

Middle East

Israeli bus drivers set to strike

Bus drivers working for Egged Transportation and Superbus were due to carry out a countrywide one-day strike on September 2 between 4am and 4pm.

The strike was set to coincide with the first day of school for many Israeli school children. They are employed as private drivers but when driving public transport buses are not paid at the same rate as public transport drivers who are directly employed. They were protesting the failure by the Ministry of Finance to keep to an agreement to increase the drivers' pay to NIS 43 (\$12) a month by the end of August.

Strike by Israeli consulate support staff

Around 600 support staff at Israeli consulates around the world held a strike August 30. The surprise action was to protest delays in discussions

with the Finance Ministry over concerns by the support staff about working conditions.

Africa

Protesting Swaziland workers attacked by paramilitary police

Protesting Swaziland textile workers, mainly women at Juris manufacturers, Nhlango, were fired on by a force of around 200 paramilitary police last Thursday. The police were supported by prison warders equipped with riot shields and batons.

An injured pregnant woman had to be taken to hospital.

Workers were protesting over poor pay and the company responded by locking them out. Workers confronted police by demanding to know why their workmates had been attacked.

The attack on the textile workers follows nurses being tasered by police on a demonstration in Mebane, and a school teacher suffering a gunshot wound while protesting in Mazini just over a week ago.

The protests by nurses and teachers were against the government's refusal to offer an annual wage increase.

South African gold miners set to strike company

Gold miners at South Africa's Harmony Gold Phakisa mines received a certificate to strike from the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration.

A strike was to start at the beginning of last Sunday's night shift.

The National Union of Mineworkers claim Harmony's management is in the process of eliminating all past agreements with the NUM, leaving it no choice but to strike.

South Africa former waste disposal workers demonstrate for jobs

Workers denied employment at Pikitup waste disposal services in Johannesburg, South Africa continue to protest. Operations in four of the provinces areas had to be suspended as aggrieved workers disrupted collections.

Police are being brought in to escort waste collections in an attempt to defeat protests.

The long running dispute was created when an employment scheme—jozie@work—was disbanded, leaving many without jobs and only a few employed.

Nigerian aviation workers set to picket airport terminals for reinstatements

Nigeria airport workers are set to picket Murtala Muhammed Airport (MMA) terminal in Lagos next week.

Management of the airport terminal, Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited (BASL), walked out of a meeting with the government's aviation authority, while attempts were being made to settle a dispute over union

representation.

The unions are protesting the sacking of 26 workers that had attempted to join a union of their choice.

Two unions in dispute with management, the Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria and the National Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers, planned to picket the terminal on Thursday.

Nigerian Labour Congresses end strike without pay resolution

A strike by public sector workers in Osun state called by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) has ended. The two labour bodies called a three-day warning strike over many months of unpaid workers wages and pensions.

Although no resolution to the wages and pension deficits was forthcoming at the end of the strike period, no further action is planned. The NLC and the TUC claimed the government was out of town last week and they had promised to meet them this week.

Kenyan hospital staff strike over wages and resignation demand

Hospital staff at Embu Level Five Hospital Kenya came out on strike Monday demanding the resignation of Chief Executive Officer, Moses Njue. Staff including nurses, clinical officers and lab technicians protested outside the CEO's office.

A consultant, Mary Njoroge, claims Njue physically assaulted her by slapping her face and verbally embarrassed her in front of patients.

The Kenyan National Union of Nurses (KNUN) said they will not return until the CEO is removed.

In a separate dispute nurses, also KNUN members, in Nakuru City hospitals, Kenya are continuing their strike over two months of unpaid wages. The county authorities failed in their promise to pay wages by August 28.

They came out last Wednesday after protesting at Nakuru's Level Five hospital over their wages, promotions and lack of drugs.



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