

Turkey's only oil refinery hit by strike, further rail strikes in the UK, Cypriot teachers' strike

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

**21 September 2018**

## **Turkish refinery workers' strike**

Workers at Turkey's only oil refinery, Tupras's Aliaga, went on strike on September 14 following two previous two-hour strikes. They were protesting planned shift changes and management's failure to implement an agreed collective working agreement.

## **Rail staff at London station vote to strike**

Staff at St. Pancras station in London are to hold a 48-hour strike beginning midnight on Saturday September 29. St. Pancras is the UK Eurostar terminal for services to the continent.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union members are protesting dangerous working conditions due to overcrowding at the terminal. They have taken previous action and this time are set to be joined by Eurostar train managers.

## **Further strike by rail staff at northern UK rail franchise**

Rail conductors at Arriva Rail North will hold a 24-hour strike on Saturday, with another strike planned for the following weekend. Arriva North runs services in northern England.

Rail, Maritime and Transport union members are opposed to plans by Arriva to introduce driver operated only (DOO) trains, threatening 6,000 guards' jobs and passenger safety.

At Arriva, as with other rail franchises, the RMT has limited action to regional, short-term strikes in order to isolate and dissipate struggles, without fundamentally affecting rail operations. It has already sealed deals with rail franchises at ScotRail and Greater Anglia over DOO.

RMT and Arriva Rail management were due to meet on Wednesday for talks under the auspices of Acas, the government conciliation service.

## **Staff at Bolton hospital in northwest England vote to strike**

Hospital staff employed by Bolton iFM, a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Bolton Hospital, voted by over 90 percent to strike. The Unison trade union members, responsible for cleaning, portering and catering, are protesting a 2 percent pay rise compared to offers of more to staff working directly for the NHS.

## **Scotland: Glasgow council staff strike vote**

Over 2,000 women workers employed by arms-length council service provider, Cordia, have voted by a 98 percent majority to strike. Their roles include home care, catering and cleaning.

The GMB union members are seeking to resolve a 10-year-long dispute over equal pay and to be paid the same rate as men performing similar roles. Unison is balloting its 3,000 members over the same issue.

## **UK hospitality workers to strike at three companies**

Workers at some branches of JD Wetherspoon, McDonald's and T.G.I. Friday's are to take coordinated strike action on October 4 for £10 an hour and union recognition.

The strike will include workers from a number of McDonald's branches in London and two branches of pub chain Wetherspoon on the south coast.

The organisations involved are seeking to confine any protests, with planned strikes causing as little disruption as possible to the companies involved. Among those organising the token action is the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union. The *Guardian* reported that in Brighton the ballots were sent to just 20 employees, "while others taking part in the strike are expected to include McDonald's workers from four London restaurants and workers from TGI Fridays branches."

## **Cypriot teachers' strike**

Around 4,000 primary, middle and high school teachers struck in Cyprus Tuesday and Wednesday over employment terms. They are protesting poor infrastructure, assessments and health and safety

problems. Their main grievances are teaching times, retirement lump sums and the right of union representatives to act during working hours.

Talks failed to resolve the dispute, leading to a previous strike by OELMK, POED, OLETK members on July 13.

### **Finnish trade unions members oppose government employment legislation**

On Tuesday, Finnish services union PAM announced an overtime ban. It is the latest union to take such action in opposition to plans of the right-wing coalition government to make it easier to sack workers in businesses comprising no more than 20 staff. No date has yet been set for the action.

Workers in the AKT transport union and the PRO union body are already carrying out an overtime ban over the same issue. Members of TEHY, the health and social care staff union, together with nurses in SUPER, are due to begin a three-day overtime ban and refuse to swap shifts beginning September 26.

### **Strike threat by Irish bus company drivers**

Drivers at Irish bus company Bus Eireann are seeking a pay rise and threatening to strike. They want an increase in line with other transport workers of between 2.5 to 3.75 percent.

Members of the National Bus and Rail Union (NBRU) and the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union held a three-day strike in March last year. The company forced through work practice changes because of financial strictures.

NBRU general secretary Dermot O'Leary said the company is now expanding its services but Bus Eireann staff have not had a pay rise in 10 years.

### **Ballot of staff at Irish IT firm**

Staff working for the Indian owned IT services company HCL are to be balloted for strike action. The Communications Workers Union members are protesting "derisory" redundancy terms being offered. HCL is to lay off around 650 staff after Eir, the Irish telecoms company, announced it was to bring around 900 customer service jobs back in-house. They had previously been outsourced to HCL.

### **Maltese ferry workers action**

Gozo Channel ferry staff were due to begin industrial action Monday. The members of the UHM union were protesting different working conditions for contracted workers. Cabin attendants were instructed not to clean toilets while sailors were instructed not to tie up the ship at the pier.

### **Sickout by Israeli train drivers**

Train drivers working for Israel Railways conducted a sickout on Sunday, with 35 calling in sick.

The drivers are seeking improved pay and better working conditions. They returned to work Tuesday after Histadrut, the general federation of labour, intervened.

The action saw the cancellation of 13 trains. On Monday, 21 trains were cancelled between Rishon Lezion and Lod and nine between Beit Shemesh and Jerusalem.

### **Nigerian public servants to strike over unpaid wages**

Local government workers in Ekiti state, Nigeria are to begin indefinite strike action Friday over seven months' unpaid wages.

The state government and Joint Accounts Allocations Committee reneged on a wage agreement signed September 4.

The Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) opposed a state government proposal to employ a further 2,000 workers, while their present employees are owed months of unpaid wages.

Workers responded angrily to the cancellation of a previous strike call by NULGE for August 23, after the intervention of the Local Government Service Commission. Adamawa State NULGE President Hammanjumba Gatugel said the strike was suspended because the "Local Government Service Commission and the commissioner ... are our custodians, we want to give them the benefit of doubt."

### **Swaziland public sector national strike vote**

Public sector workers in the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland voted for a three-day national strike starting Tuesday to demand a pay increase this year. The vote was held after negotiations for a 6.5 percent pay rise failed.

Angry teachers stayed away from classes across the country as they crowded into meetings to vote for industrial action.

Another 500 teachers missed school to attend a court hearing in Manzini to support arrested colleague Maxwell Myeni, accused of violently assaulting a police commander. The approach to Manzini court house was lined by 200 members of the Royal eSwatini Police Service and prison warders.

After the Swaziland National Association of Teachers visited the court, the court appearance was postponed until November.

### **Sierra Leone special teachers in dispute over vacation bonus**

Sierra Leone teachers responsible for Senior Secondary School pupils from level 3 to 4 (GCE level) threatened a sit-down strike from September 17.

The 10 teachers contracted to give extra catch-up lessons from mid-July until August have not been paid their holiday bonus for five years. Sierra Leone's minister of education claimed this was because they have neither bank accounts nor pin codes.

### **South African student halls security staff strike**

Security staff employed by South Point Buildings (SPB) South Africa struck on September 11 for a wage increase.

SPB provides security and other services to university and college halls of residence in Johannesburg.

Security workers want an increase to R8,500 (US \$570) from around R3,000 (US \$200) a month and improved work conditions.

Students joined a demonstration by guards complaining that staff have been sacked, with services previously provided not carried out.



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### **South African mortuary workers boycott work over lack of safety gear**

Mortuary workers are staying away from work at the Germiston mortuary in Ekurhuleni, South Africa because of lack of safety equipment.

The stay-away is causing trauma to families wanting to bury their relatives, and who have demanded a meeting with the mortuary's chief executive.

The members of the South African Liberated Public Sector Workers Union and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union said they were not on strike, but boycotting work until supplied with protective equipment.

### **South African university bus drivers and cleaners strike**

South Africa Cape Town university Jammie Shuttle bus drivers joined cleaners in a strike over pay and recruitment last week.

The shuttle is a free bus service provided to students travelling to and from Cape Town University and the airport.

Bus drivers joined resident cleaning service workers, who are striking to demand additional payments for seasonal cleaning of residences.

Cleaners demand an extra R1,200 (US \$80) to clean student dwellings during the vacation period.

As reported in IOL, the Democratised Transport Logistics and Allied Workers Union (DETAUWU) claim the transport manager is using his position to employ friends and people he knows to drive the shuttles.

### **South African ex-Pikitup workers continue protest over job losses**

Refuse collection workers previously employed at Pikitup in Johannesburg, South Africa continue to protest the refuse company that took away their jobs.

Pikitup employed over 3,000 workers until recently when it reduced staff numbers to 1,400.

The workers—forced into unemployment to join the already 50 percent of the country's adults without work—have been protesting over the sackings over the last month.

The ex-employees are being held responsible for rubbish-strewn streets, irrespective of the more than halving of the workforce.

Pikitup now employs the protection service of the South African Police Force as it does its rounds.