

Further UK rail strikes; Nigerian unions sell out minimum wage dispute

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

12 October 2018

## Further strikes by UK rail franchise staff

Rail staff working for the Arriva North rail franchise are due to hold a 24-hour strike tomorrow. A further 24-hour strike is planned for October 20.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members have been in dispute against plans by the company to extend the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains.

DOO threatens passenger safety and 6,000 conductors' jobs at train franchises nationally.

Members of the RMT at South Western Railway are to hold a further nine strikes between October 23 and November 24 over the DOO.

The RMT has limited action against DOO to regional, short-term strikes to isolate and dissipate struggles, without fundamentally affecting rail operations. It has already sealed deals with rail franchises at ScotRail and Greater Anglia. The union has agreed a sellout deal "in principle" with Merseyrail and the Labour Party-led Liverpool City Region Combined Authority whereby "door control and dispatch of the trains will transfer to the driver" on new trains.

## Scottish rail staff begin overtime ban

Around 2,000 rail guards and station staff employed by ScotRail began an overtime ban on Wednesday. The RMT members are refusing to do overtime or work rest days. They are seeking parity with drivers who are paid £300 for working scheduled rest days.

## Hospital workers strike in northwest England

The 600 staff providing catering, cleaning and portering services at the Royal Bolton hospital were due to begin a 48-hour strike Thursday.

The Unison members union work for Bolton iFM, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bolton *National Health Service* (NHS). They are demanding to be paid an increase in line with NHS staff under the Agenda for Change rates due to begin December. This would mean a minimum £9.89 an hour. Bolton iFM has offered a pay increase in line with the so-called living wage rate currently set at £8.75.

If there is no movement on the pay claim, Unison has warned of a further three-day strike beginning October 23.

## Uber drivers in three UK cities hold 24-hour strike

Around 1,000 Uber drivers in the UK cities of London, Birmingham and Nottingham staged a 24-hour strike beginning 1 p.m. Tuesday.

Drivers held protests outside Uber offices in the three cities. The members of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain are demanding an increase in fares to £2 per mile, currently £1.25 in London, and for a 10 percent reduction in commission paid by drivers to Uber. The drivers appealed to the public to refrain from using the Uber hailing app throughout the 24-hour strike period.

## Dinner ladies at school in South Yorkshire, England plan indefinite strike

School meal staff at the Ladywood Primary School in Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire are planning an indefinite strike. The Unison members already held six days of strikes in September. The school plans to sack the nine workers as part of budget cuts and instruct teaching assistants to carry out their role.

Unison has said it had identified other areas where cuts could be made without redundancies and has offered to suspend strike action if the school agrees to review staffing costs. The school has refused, and an all-out strike is now on the agenda.

## German Nestle workers protest

Some 400 workers employed by Nestle in Germany journeyed to the company's headquarters in Vevey, Switzerland on October 2.

The members of the NGG union were protesting plans by Nestle to cut around 600 jobs throughout its German operation. Proposed job losses include over 100 at the company's coffee producing plant in Ludwigsburg and 170 losses at baby food production lines in Ludinghausen and

Biessenhofen.

### **Greek museum workers strike**

Workers at the Greek Ministry of Culture staged a 24-hour strike on October 4. The employees at state museums and archeological sites were demanding their employer publish a list of assets for possible sale. It is rumored that some historical sites are on a list for private tendering.

### **Walkout by porters at Irish hospital**

Around 50 porters working at University Hospital in Limerick staged a two-hour walkout between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Tuesday.

The members of the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union are protesting management's failure to hold discussions on industrial relations issues, including the closure of a staff communal room. The stoppage coincided with a press conference held at the hospital over the more than 70 deaths there between 2009 and 2017, attributed to a superbug.

### **Strike by Spanish airport staff called off**

A proposed indefinite strike by 60,000 Spanish airport staff was called off last week. The walkout was scheduled to begin on October 15. The workers responsible for ground handling tasks including loading and unloading luggage are seeking improved pay and conditions.

Three years of negotiations by the Air sectors of the USO, UGT and CCOO unions and airports' management had failed to reach agreement and talks broke down completely in September. A new agreement negotiated last week, details of which have yet to be revealed, will run through December 2021.

### **Ukrainian miners block road in wages protest**

On October 5, miners from the Donetsk region blocked the Dnipro to Donetsk highway for the third day running. The members of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine are demanding wage arrears. A previous three-day protest failed to obtain payment of the arrears.

### **Nationwide dispute declared by Israeli union body**

Histadrut, the Israeli union federation, has declared an official work dispute covering all unionised workers. This means the government and unions must open negotiations over the next two weeks to settle the dispute. If no settlement is reached a strike may follow.

Workers are concerned over safety at work. So far this year there have

been 31 deaths in the construction industry due to the government's failure to enforce safety measures.

### **Nigerian unions agree sell-out minimum wage deal**

A new Nigerian minimum wage agreed by the National Labour Congress (NLC), the government and employers will be announced next week.

The NLC, the Trade Union Congress and the United Labour Congress covering most of the unions suspended a general strike after two days, when the government put forward a new minimum wage figure and proposed negotiations for October 4 and 5.

The government initially offered N21,000, whereas the Organised Private Sector offered between N25,000 and R40,000. The other private sector employers, the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association, NECA, agreed to pay whatever the government negotiated.

The NLC reduced the demand of workers from N56,000-N65,000 to N30,000, but the government said it couldn't afford more than N25,000.

Minimum wage negotiations are statutory every five years, and negotiations should begin from September.

### **Lesotho car seating workers sacked for striking**

Two hundred-fifty Lesotho textile workers, half the workforce of 540 at the ADIENT PTY car seat covering company, have been sacked.

The members of the National Clothing Textile and Allied Workers Union had extended a lunchtime protest on September 13 over the refusal of the company to negotiate a 15 percent pay claim.

The union is taking the case to the Labour Court.

In June, thousands of factory employees, security guards and general workers from the retail and catering sector demonstrated and petitioned the country's president for all workers to get a 15 percent pay rise and a M2000 (US\$136) minimum wage. The workers also demanded that President Tom Thabane sack Labour Minister Keketso Rantšo for ignoring their concerns.

Adient was formerly a part of US auto parts maker Johnson Controls. It separated in 2016 and became a stand-alone, publicly traded operation.

### **Malawian building workers strike over poor wages and alleged racism**

Malawian building workers went on strike on Monday to protest low wages and alleged racism. A new supervisor of less than a week is accused of verbally and physically abusing the workforce. The workers blocked the main entrance to the construction site and demanded management investigate.

The builders employed at Terrastone Construction Limited are building a Bureau of Standards Laboratory. The \$12.7 million project is supported by a Contribution Agreement between the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme.

## **Ugandan teachers in Serere protest unpaid wages**

Over 100 Ugandan teachers protested outside Serere district headquarters October 3, demanding to know why they have not been paid for over seven months.

One teacher said that despite being issued with pay slips each month, no money had gone into his account. He was Sh6 million (US\$1,582) in debt and had to mortgage his land to pay for his two children's education.

The Serere chief administrator claimed it was possible that a few teachers had been missed in their new payment integration system that requires verification of employees tax codes and tax identification numbers.

## **South African social service workers to strike over welfare payment system**

Employees of South Africa's Social Service Agency (SASSA) were preparing to strike on Wednesday this week over problems with a new payment system.

Payments to 17 million dependents can be compromised by hackers and/or fraudulent practices, claims the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU).

The new biometric system payments have been transferred to the Post Office, but SASSA employees are complaining about glitches in the system that make it vulnerable and even unworkable. NEHAWU members are demanding that the system be suspended, discussion on the biometric system be given priority, and workers given training.

## **South African nurses threaten national strike over wage claim and unpaid wages**

Nurses and assistants employed as part of the Community Care Givers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, demonstrated on October 5 over outstanding wages and for a wage increase.

The Health and Other Services Personnel of South Africa members are threatening all-out strike action next week if their wages are not increased to R3,500 (the minimum wage) and promised wage arrears paid. Their present pay rates are well under the statutory wage, averaging R1,950.

A memorandum of demands was handed to the chief of staff at the office of Premier Samuel Khuzwayo.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**