

South Africa Sibanye miners' strike made illegal

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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

UK rail staff at two franchises plan industrial action over Christmas holiday

Rail guards at two UK train companies protesting the use of driver only operated trains (DOO) are to continue strikes over the holiday period.

Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members at the Arriva North franchise serving northern England are set to strike tomorrow in their 41st day of action. Further 24-hour strikes are planned for December 29 and each Saturday in January.

RMT members at South Western Railway are to strike tomorrow for 24 hours, with further stoppages on December 27 and 31.

The RMT has limited action against the private rail franchises to regional, short-term strikes, isolating and dissipating struggles. It has already sealed deals with rail franchises at ScotRail and Greater Anglia.

The union has also agreed to a sell-out 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. In June, the RMT agreed to a framework deal with West Midlands Trains that "On such new or modified rolling stock, train drivers will operate the train doors and undertake train dispatch in normal circumstances ..."

RMT members working on London Underground's Bakerloo line are to strike on Boxing Day (December 26) and on January 14. They are protesting staff shortages on some shifts, leading to dangerous working conditions.

Union suspends planned strike of bus drivers in Durham, England

The Unite union called off a planned strike due to start Monday by drivers employed at Arriva buses in Durham, northwest England. The drivers were due to begin a weeklong strike last Sunday.

Unite called it off after agreeing a new pay offer with management after three days of discussion. The drivers are to be balloted on the proposed new deal. Unite regional officer Bob Bolam said, "We will not be discussing the details of the revised offer until our members have had an opportunity to consider and vote on it."

Refuse workers in Birmingham, England vote for industrial action

Around 300 refuse workers employed by Birmingham City Council have voted by over 90 percent to strike and take other industrial action. This follows the council's plans to give bonuses only to refuse workers who did not take part in a bitter dispute in 2017.

The Unite union members are due to begin an overtime ban on December 29.

UK royal palaces staff to strike

Staff working for Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) who provide security at the Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace are set to strike January 8. The action will include the Beefeaters, who are the ceremonial guardians at the Tower.

The GMB union members are opposing the move by HRP to end their final salary pensions and replace it with an inferior one. HRP workers were promised their pensions would be protected when their jobs were privatised.

Portuguese workers poised to strike across many sectors

Workers at Galp Energia oil refineries at Sines and Matosinhos, Portugal began a weeklong strike Monday. They are pushing for increased pay and a new collective bargaining agreement. A further strike by the Fiequimetal union members is planned for January 2 to 14, pending the outcome of negotiations.

Workers in different sectors have lodged dozens of strike warnings over the Christmas period. Among them are immigration and border staff, as well as security staff at two airports. Hospital theatre nurses are due to restart industrial action after the Christmas break.

Irish health staff set to strike

Nurses belonging to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) voted by a 95 percent majority to strike. The main issue is

prolonged low pay that has led to a recruitment problem, with staff shortages creating unsafe works conditions.

They will hold a series of 24-hour strikes but will provide emergency cover. The strike vote follows a rejection by over 90 percent of nurses of the Ministry for Health's October pay proposal. INMO is refusing to sanction industrial action immediately and will instead meet on January 7 and 8 to discuss the strike vote.

Nurses in the Psychiatric Nurses Association (PNA) voted by the same margin for strike action after rejecting the Ministry of Health offer. The issue of low pay has also led to recruitment issues for psychiatric nurses. The PNA executive is due to meet January 10 to discuss possible industrial action.

Irish Tesco supermarket staff to hold further strikes

Following strikes by staff at Irish branches of Tesco in Sligo and Carrick-on-Shannon earlier this month, further action is due to take place today and tomorrow. Carrick workers plan to strike tomorrow and Sligo staff are due to strike today and tomorrow in the run-up to Christmas.

The Mandate union members voted by a majority of more than 80 percent to take action. They accuse the company of refusing to abide by collective agreements. They also seek improved canteen facilities, and for the union to be able to negotiate on pay, weekly hours worked and rosters.

The 180 staff recruited before 1996 have refused to change their contract to one with less favourable hours. They have not had pay rises in line with other workers in contracts from 1996 onwards.

Rally to defend health insurance in Austrian capital

Around 4,000 protesters rallied outside the health insurance headquarters in Vienna on December 13. They were opposing the right-wing Austrian government's new social insurance legislation, under which private sector employees will be forced to subsidise people who have private health insurance. The system prioritizes ambulances to hospitals for those with private health insurance.

More than 60 percent of the population are opposed to the legislation of Chancellor Sebastian Kurz's coalition government

Work stoppage by Cypriot dockers

Dockers at the Cypriot port of Limassol held a two-hour strike beginning 8 a.m. on December 14. The workers accuse their employers of failing to abide by the current collective employment agreement. They accuse the companies of failing to hire enough staff, to abide by agreed job demarcation rules and failure to pay agreed rates.

According to the In-Cyprus news website, dockers opposed a compromise deal arranged between unions and employers.

Nationwide strike by Israeli social workers

Israeli social work staff carried out a nationwide strike Monday. It was part of an ongoing campaign for better pay and working conditions and to protest violence against them.

Turkish rail workers boycott reopening of line ceremony following fatal crash

On Monday, Turkish rail workers boycotted the reopening of a stretch of line in Ankara following a rail crash last week in which nine people died. The fatalities occurred when a high-speed train ran into a stationary train.

Rail workers said the stretch of high-speed line has insufficient signal controls. Rail movements are instead controlled by two-way radio, which can lead to mistakes and misunderstandings.

Iranian steel workers arrested

On Monday, Iranian security forces arrested 13 steel workers in their homes in the early hours of the morning.

The workers are from a steel factory in Ahvaz in southwestern Iran and have been carrying out strikes and protests against wage arrears for the last two months. The recent arrests bring the total number of those detained to over 40.

South Africa Sibanye miners' strike made illegal

Fifteen thousand gold miners are continuing their four-week strike at Sibanye's three mines in action that has now been made illegal.

Based on accusations of picket line violence (four miners have been killed in the strike) AMCU's strike has now been declared illegal. Alleged violence by union members on the picket lines can be used as a reason to ban a strike.

Members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) came out on November 21 after rejecting a deal signed by the National Union of Mineworkers and two other small unions, calling it a slave labour deal.

AMCU said deal could not go through while they opposed it, as they were the majority single union among the 32,000 workforce, with AMCU being awarded a strike certificate.

AMCU claims that Sibanye has been encouraging recruitment of its members to the other three unions in order to bring their total representation to above 50 percent. Under South African labour law amendments, if above 50 percent of the total union membership accepts a deal, it is imposed on the rest of the workforce.

South African airline workers' strike threat goes to arbitration

Workers employed at South African airline Comair were threatening to strike Thursday unless an agreement for improvements in wages and condition was met.

Workers organised in the National Union of Metalworkers of South

Africa (NUMSA) are demanding a 12 percent wage increase and a 13-month bonus payment among other claims.

Comair's 2,206 employees, of which around 370 are NUMSA members, manages flights for British Airways and Kulula at South Africa's airports.

Amendments to labour laws implemented in November allow the unions (which were instrumental in developing the legislation) to go straight to arbitration, which has happened in this case.

The Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) is to meet on December 20 to discuss the dispute. In the event of the failure of the CCMA to settle the strike, Comair said they plan in the "unlikely event of a strike" to use other employees as strike-breakers.

Union federation to call a South Africa-wide general strike in March

South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) are planning a two-day general strike on March 26-27 over unemployment and poverty. The federation said the shutdown will include 147 community organisations and a demonstration in Cape Town.

SAFTU is a rival of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions, which is a member of the tripartite African National Congress (ANC) government.

The strike will follow the passage of the new minimum wage bill to be implemented from January 1. The minimum wage is being set at R20 an hour and not R3,500 a month, as initially conceived.

South African mortuary workers released from jail

South African mortuary workers at the Medico Legal Mortuary in Pietermaritzburg, arrested December 10, were released on Tuesday with a warning. The judge told jailed workers to return to work and function optimally or be dismissed. They had been arrested for carrying out a go-slow, deemed illegal.

Sixteen Durban mortuary staff who came out in support of the Pietermaritzburg workers were also arrested and released with a warning. Another three mortuaries had been on a go-slow across the province.

Workers are demanding safe working conditions and equipment, a pay rise and back pay. A major grievance is that broken refrigeration and air conditioning units have made working conditions intolerable.

The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union Workers Union did nothing to oppose the victimisations and satisfied the court by reporting that the Medico Legal Mortuary workers were back at their posts.

Nigerian parliamentary staff strike over outstanding pay claim

Parliamentary staff in Nigeria came out on a four-day warning strike beginning Monday to demand an outstanding pay raise. Members of the Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria blocked and picketed entrance gates to the Assembly complex.

Part of their grievance stems from a disputed 2010 CONLESS (wage and condition) agreement.

The Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria said President

Muhammadu Buhari and lawmakers, presenting the budget Wednesday, and other upper grade staff alongside tourist would be allowed access during the strike.

Despite the concession, security personnel were deployed in force, including the military police, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, Department of Civil Defence and the Assembly Security.

Nigerian educators strike for reinstatement of sacked teachers

Education workers began a three-day strike Monday, demanding the government implement a two-year-old court order. The warning strike and protest was supported by two other unions.

The federal government was ordered by the National Industrial Court two years ago to reinstate sacked staff teachers in universities, which it has ignored to date.

Members of the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria came out to demand the reinstatements and in protest at government promises not being adhered to. Strikers were also protesting the renegeing on funding of N8 billion in allowances.

Nigerian aviation workers strike and demonstrate over broken agreement

Aviation workers in Nigeria came out on a one-day strike and demonstration Friday last week at airports across the country over the non-implementation of an agreement.

Workers of the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE) picketed at Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos and sealed the offices of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria and the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency.

The headquarters of the Accident Investigation Bureau and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority at Lagos airport were shut down.

A similar protest took place at Abuja international airport last Friday by NUATE members and the Air Transport Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSAN).

The stoppage was provoked by the National Salaries, Income and Wages Commission, who again reneged on the implementation of a Conditions of Service agreement. Some workers had not had their Service agreements realized since 2003. A NUATE union spokesman said only around 50 percent of the airport workforce has had an agreement implemented.

Gabon Total oil workers strike over sacked colleagues

Total oil company workers in Gabon struck for three days beginning Tuesday last week to demand the reinstatement of sacked workers. The sackings followed a 15-day strike when negotiations failed to agree on a bonus and a wage increase.

The French oil company retrenched six workers, but only four were reinstated. The members of the National Organization of Petroleum Employees union demand the remaining two get their jobs back.



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