

UK rail strike at South Western Railway, Sibanye gold and platinum miners' strike continues

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Union suspends Irish nurses' strike

A three-day strike by around 35,000 Irish nurses due from Tuesday has been suspended by the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO), following a recommendation by the Labour Court.

Nurses were demanding a 12 percent pay rise to match extra productivity caused by the staff shortages experienced by many hospitals and clinics.

An INMO executive statement to members stated, “[T]here is enough in the recommendation to suspend our strikes to allow time to consider its proposals”. The membership will vote on the recommendations.

According to an *Irish Examiner* article of February 13, “INMO will face an uphill struggle to convince its members to accept the Labour Court’s pay recommendation, raising the likelihood that nurses could soon return to the picket lines.”

Nurses have taken to social media to denounce the Labour Court’s proposals, which fall short of the nurses’ demands. The *Irish Examiner* article quoted a hospital nurse saying, “Is all the struggle and effort over the last few weeks going to count for nothing... Back out on the picket lines until we get what we asked for.”

The smaller Psychiatric Nurses Association representing around 6,000 nurses has also suspended the three days of action it was to take in conjunction with the INMO members.

Wildcat strike by Scottish postal workers in Glasgow

Scottish postal workers at a Glasgow Royal Mail delivery office held an unofficial walkout on February 6—sparked by bullying and harassment by Royal Mail management. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) intervened and after talks the CWU negotiated a return to work on Monday.

Similar walkouts have taken place across the UK due to management bullying and harassment as they increase the workloads of postal workers.

In a separate dispute, CWU workers in the Northern Irish town of Bangor voted to strike on February 23 and 25. The action is in support of two postmen who were given a two-year suspended dismissal in September last year. They were accused of failing to complete their duty schedule. They deny the charge.

Rail workers at South Western Railway in England vote for further strikes

Rail workers at South Western Railway voted by a near 90 percent majority to continue strikes in opposition to the extension of the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members will hold 24-hour strikes on February 22 and March 9 and 16.

South Western Railway runs services from central London to South West London. Other routes include suburban and regional services in a number of counties—Surrey, Hampshire, Dorset, Devon, Somerset, Berkshire and Wiltshire.

DOO threatens 6,000 jobs and passenger safety.

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

Planned strikes by guards at Arriva North in northern England were called off last week by the RMT after Arriva North guaranteed a conductor on all trains at talks brokered by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. The exact role of the conductor is yet to be determined.

The union has 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.

Strike by outsourced workers government department office in London

Employees at two companies that provide contract workers at the UK government’s Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) offices in London began strike action Wednesday. The Public and Commercial Services union members are demanding payment of the London Living Wage, currently set at £10.55.

They provide security, portering, cleaning, catering and administrative services at the BEIS office. Workers at Aramark were to begin a 24-hour strike at 3:30 pm while those at Engie were to begin a 26-hour strike at 5 pm.

They were also due to hold a two-hour picket outside BEIS offices on

Victoria Street in Westminster between 8am and 10am on Thursday.

Further strike at print works in Suffolk, England

Around 75 UK workers employed by CPI William Clowes in Suffolk, England were to hold their fourth 24-hour strike on Wednesday. They held a 24-hour strike on January 17.

The Unite members are striking against an imposed pay freeze. Their last pay rise was for just one percent in 2017 and their previous raise was a decade earlier.

UK food delivery staff strike in Manchester, England

UK food delivery couriers employed by Deliveroo in Manchester were to strike Thursday against low pay and insecure employment.

Industrial Workers of the World members are demanding a minimum payment of £5 per delivery, £8 for a double order, a £10 an hour waiting rate and a minimum of £1 for every additional mile travelled.

Strike by Croatian farm machinery workers in Zupanja enters second month

Workers at the Same Deutz Fahr Zetelice farm machinery factory in Zupanja, Croatia struck January 9. More than 300 workers are fighting against low wages. The company applied to the Supreme Court to have the strike declared illegal.

Strike by Hungarian Tesco administration staff in Győr

Last week, payroll staff at supermarket giant Tesco's office in the city of Győr, northwest Hungary, carried out a two-hour warning strike. The Independent Union of Trade Workers members are protesting plans by Tesco to cut staff in its payroll and accounting department.

Municipal workers in Haifa, Israel ordered back to work

Striking municipal workers in the Israeli port city of Haifa were ordered back to work on Sunday by the Labour Court. The majority of the city's municipal workers, including kindergarten and refuse workers, walked out on February 6. The strike was joined by teachers on February 8.

Their demands included the reinstatement of 12 sanitation workers previously sacked, higher pay for kindergarten assistants and hiring extra kindergarten workers to deal with overcrowded classes.

The refuse workers strike led to the piling up of rubbish in the streets, which soon began to smell in the heat.

South African labour court rejects Sibanye Gold appeal to force workers back to work

A labour court hearing has thrown out a demand by South African gold mining company, Sibanye Gold, aimed at forcing 15,000 striking miners back to work.

Members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) are striking for a R1,000 a month pay rise each year, over the next three years. Out since November 22, they were joined by Sibanye Stillwater's platinum miners in January.

Three minority unions have agreed a wage deal rejected by AMCU members. Under labour law the union/unions with members over 50 percent of the workforce decides the deal. The arbitration service, AMCU and the company could not agree on a method for counting to verify this.

Sibanye is hoping to starve the workers back, noting that each employee has lost R40,000 in pay.

Sibanye management recently raised the possibility of 5,000 job losses at its Driefontein gold mine.

South African college workers strike over wages and conditions

A national strike was called at Learning, Technical and Vocational colleges across South Africa from Thursday.

The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union members are demanding the resignation of the director general of the colleges for not applying college regulations, including governing body selection rules. They are also complaining at the lack of pay allowance increases since 2015 and the ignoring of seniority recognition and promotions.

Other grievances include owed and unpaid benefits and the victimisation and sacking of shop stewards.

South African council workers at Cape Town company demonstrate over sackings for joining a union

South African public service workers protested on Tuesday after 60 employees were sacked for joining a trade union.

The Cape Town recycling company, Don't Waste, sacked employees when they joined the South African Transport Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) in pursuit of better wages and working conditions.

Permanently employed workers were protesting the pay rate of N11.34 an hour (below the minimum wage of R20 an hour) or R2,200 a month for 12-hour shifts.

SATAWU were set to negotiate with the company until police turned up on the picket line and the bargaining was called off by management.

South African farm workers demonstrate in Cape Town over evictions

South African farm workers marched to the Western Cape Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in Cape Town where they demonstrated over evictions.

The civil society alliance (CSA) supporters held banners proclaiming,

“No to Evictions” and “Evictions violate human rights.” A representative said they had raised the issue in 2017 with the department but had no reply.

Western Cape is known as the eviction municipality with the most removals of farmers in South Africa. Around 20,000 are under threat.

The CSA spokesman is demanding South African President Cyril Ramaphosa implement his touted land reform programme of expropriation without compensation.

A demonstrator said when farms are taken over by new residents they kick the farm workers off the land and use the estates to build big houses.

The protesters handed in a memorandum to the Deputy Director of Tenure Reform for the President.

The academics unresolved demands are over a 2013 Memorandum of Understanding and a 2017 Memorandum of Action, including a revitalisation programme for the universities.

In 2017, N1.3 trillion over five years was promised for a modest revitalisation of universities. A six-month strike took place in 2013 to pressure its implementation followed by a five-week strike in 2017.



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Kenyan nurses strike grows

Some Kenyan state referral hospital workers joined nurses on strike in 10 counties. Nurses ignored a court order to suspend the stoppage, begun February 4.

The Kenyan National Union of Nurses members are protesting the non-payment of allowances including a uniform allowance, and demanding the implementation of promotions—part of a 2017 un-implemented Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

Another 18 counties have been issued with strike notices and a further 19 are waiting on the result of negotiations. Clinical officers will decide whether to join the action at its February 16 meeting over their CBA and related allowances.

The government says it does not have the money to settle with the strikers.

Unions call off Zimbabwe teachers strike

Zimbabwe teachers' unions have ordered its members back to work without an agreement with employers.

The Zimbabwe Teachers Association and the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe members are demanding a wage increase to cover inflation to be paid in US dollars.

The strike turnout on February 5 was 80 percent solid. The walkout grew in strength, despite soldiers, police, ZANU-PF militia and with local officials harassing and intimidating teachers, by taking their names and addresses and issuing death threats.

Five Zimbabweans have been shot dead since the 12 killed by soldiers in the suppression of a protest on January 17 in Harare. Over 1,000 have been rounded up. There is a “massive” police presence in Bulawayo, West Zimbabwe and the Mnangawa government is reported to have ordered US\$ 8 million worth of tear gas canisters.

Nigerian union suspends academics' three-month strike

Nigerian Academic Staff Union of Universities have suspended the three-month stoppage by academics.

Staff returned to work on Monday with the promise that the minister of labour would address their demands. The union said they had reached a “palatable agreement” with employers.