

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

South African gold miners' strike at Sibanye in third month, Kenyan striking nurses defy back to work order

22 February 2019

Tensions escalate in South Africa's Sibanye gold mine workers strike

As the strike by South Africa's Sibanye gold mineworkers continues, Sibanye announced 7,000 redundancies at its Beatrix, Kloof and Driefontein mines.

Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) members have been striking since November 22, for a R1,000 a month pay rise each year, over the next three years. Three other unions accepted a "slave labour" deal. Two of the unions are blaming the strike for the proposed job losses. The National Union of Miners said they have not been notified of the job cuts.

The AMCU called their members in Sibanye's profitable platinum mines, who came out on a one-day solidarity strike in January, to join them in permanent secondary action.

Two workers were killed last week, bringing the number of deaths in the dispute to seven.

South African national college strike begins with student support

A national college strike in South Africa began on Thursday last week over outstanding wage demands and opposition to casual employment. National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) members struck at 50 colleges around the country, affecting 230 campuses. The 15,000 workers, who are mainly on monthly contracts, are demanding permanent employment.

South African workers oppose job destruction at Coca Cola

Coca Cola South Africa is threatening to reduce its workforce by around 1,000 employees. The company claims the government's sugar tax imposed on sugary drinks last April has affected sales.

Those in danger of losing their jobs are warehouse workers, cleaners, drivers, janitors and scrub operators, as well as 650 retailers. Some workers' wages will be cut.

The Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) said that reductions are illegal and abrogate a Competition Tribunal ruling because the Coca-Cola Company merged with Coca-Cola Beverages. The rule is no job

reductions within three years of a takeover. The FAWU have threatened court or strike action.

South African Pietermaritzburg waste management workers on unofficial strike for equal pay

South African garbage collectors went on unofficial strike in Pietermaritzburg last week. They are demanding equal pay for equal work and safe working conditions.

New legislation stipulates all unions go through the arbitration system before any strike can be authorized, but this mandate has been rejected by the strikers.

Workers say that the wage disparity for the same work is between R8,000 and R17,000.

Workers occupied the Msunduzi waste management unit while a mountain of rubbish collected outside.

Kenyan nurses defy Presidential order to return to work

The majority of Kenya's nurses are rejecting a back-to-work order by President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Three thousand seven hundred nurses out of a workforce of 5,630 are out and the government says it will not pay their wages and is threatening to sack them.

The strike started February 4 to protest the non-payment of allowances, including a uniform allowance, and the demand for the implementation of promotions contained in a 2017 Collective Bargaining Agreement that was never implemented.

Up to the middle of this week 19 counties were out on strike and more are expected to follow.

Council of Governors Chairman Wycliffe Oparanya has sent out instructions to all relevant bodies not to deduct Kenyan National Union of Nurses union dues from nurses' pay to cut off the union's income.

The Kenya Union of Clinical Officers decided on February 16 not to join the nurses strike in return for union recognition.

Nigeria's Abia state doctors strike over unpaid wages

Doctors in Nigeria's Abia state went on a three-day warning strike Thursday last week over unpaid wages.

Doctors have not been paid at Abia State University Teaching Hospital for the last 11 months and the State Hospital Management Board has not been paid for eight months.

Nigerian state workers strike in Nairobi to get contract implemented

Nigerian state government workers in Nairobi went on strike and demonstrated outside parliament last week demanding the implementation of their 2017 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

The CBA, affecting 13,000 workers, should have been implemented in January.

The Nairobi City County Workers Union appealed to MPs to force the employer, the Salaries Remunerations Commission, to implement the agreement.

Ghanaian cement workers strike against poor wages and conditions

Ninety-eight percent of the workforce, 1,000 workers at Ghana's Savannah Cement Company at Buipe, have struck to demand the company address wages and conditions.

Workers complain of inadequate wage increases over the years, citing, for example, their latest increase for this year of 1 Ghana Cedi, or a fifth of a dollar on the rate. The daily minimum wage in Ghana is Cedi 10.65 or US\$2 a day.

The general manager said he never listens to the demands of the workforce and those who are not satisfied can leave.

Dock workers strike to stop sell-off of Sudan's ports

Eighteen hundred Sudanese port workers are on strike in Port Sudan to protest the privatisation of the docks and job losses. If sold off, health and education provided by port authorities would go.

Workers prevented company ships picking up goods for four days. The port was packed with containers and ships waiting to be unloaded.

Last month, ICTSI subsidiary ICTSI Middle East DMCC signed a 20-year deal with the Sea Ports Corporation of Sudan to operate, manage and develop the South Port Container Terminal. The company already has a four-year contract to manage container traffic. ICTSI has given the struggling Sudanese government a \$460 million down payment.

ICTSI is an enormous international operation managing ports in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas.

The Alternative Trade Union of Port Workers members are also demanding payment for November last year and the reappointment of the previous port director.

The contract is being promoted by President Omar al-Bashir. During uprisings calling for his downfall beginning in December many workers were killed by government troops.

UK lecturers ballot for action over pay

University lecturers in Scotland held a day of action on Wednesday to highlight eight years of real-terms pay cuts.

The Educational Institute of Scotland's University Lecturers' Association is one of five unions across the UK balloting for action in pursuit of a 7.5 percent or £1,500 rise for higher education workers. The government is offering 2 percent.

Further education colleges have been hit by a series of strikes and some newer universities, covered by a different pay claim.

In 2018, the University and College Union sold out the strike by 50,000 lecturers, librarians, administration staff and technicians fighting to defend their pensions and conditions.

UK refuse workers strike in Birmingham

UK refuse workers in Birmingham began the first in a series of strikes on Wednesday, after being on a work-to-rule since December 29.

The 300 Unite members are being penalized for a three-month dispute against job losses in June 2017. GMB members who did not strike received secret payments.

Pickets were out at four council refuse depots from 05:00 GMT until 14:00.

Unite's assistant general secretary Howard Beckett said the action was a "last resort" as six weeks of talks collapsed. Rats and foxes have been reported near piled up rubbish in the streets.

UK postal strike in at Wythenshawe depot in Manchester

UK postal workers in Wythenshawe, Manchester are striking on Friday and Monday to protest management bullying. The Communication Workers Union members at Royal Mail took a strike vote after two workers were disciplined, one for having time off with stress, the other for complaining about management bullying on social media.

There have been a number of strikes, many unofficial, against bullying. Postal workers on the Isle of Man went on three-day strike last week. In December 200 postal workers there struck for two days over pay and pensions.

Greek cleaners at two hospitals protest

Greek hospital cleaners at the Dromokaiteio psychiatric hospital and the AghiosSavvas cancer hospital protested outside Parliament in Athens on Wednesday, stopping traffic. The workers are demanding their short-term contracts are renewed, improved job security, and better working conditions.

Electric rail workers strike in Athens, Greece

Workers on the Piraeus-Kifissia electric railway in Athens, Greece took strike action Thursday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Workers are protesting over a number of issues: the shortage of electronic vending machines, the fact that commuters have to wait while customers complain to employees and that trains are badly maintained because more staff are needed.

Ukrainian miners in Donetsk protest non-payment of wages arrears

On Wednesday, 150 Ukrainian miners in Donetsk began an underground protest at the Kurakhivska mine, part of the State-Owned Coal-Mining Enterprise Selydivvugillia. Forty-two miners at the mine 1/3 Novogrodovska have also been on strike since 18 February.

The workers are demanding payment of wage arrears.

Iran hit by protests against austerity

Strikes and protests have hit Iran over unpaid wages. Demonstrations took place in Tabriz, Khuzestan, Mashhad, Isfahan and Tehran.

Workers who have been without pay for seven months demonstrated outside the Sarvabad municipal building in the western province of Kurdistan. In the southeast province Kerman workers protested outside the Zarand Steel Company offices over lack of pay and insurance issues. The company has also refused to pay damages after polluting crops and livestock.

The economic crisis that is fuelling the discontent is being aggravated by punitive US sanctions.



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