

Sibanye miners still out, but union suspends secondary action

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.

Africa

South Africa miners' union at Sibanye Gold calls off secondary action after labour court ruling

The Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) has suspended proposed secondary strikes that would have closed South Africa's gold, platinum and coal mines. A labour court ruled the action illegal.

Fifteen thousand AMCU members at Sibanye Stillwater Gold have been on strike since February 22 for an annual wage increase of R1,000 a month over three years. Three other unions settled for a "slave labour deal." The AMCU threatened to spread the strike after the company announced 7,000 redundancies.

The minister of mineral resources, Gwede Mantashe, has increased the presence of the police in response to an appeal from the company to "restore and safeguard the safety and security of the community." Workers' deaths in the dispute rose to nine last week, with 63 houses set alight.

Although negotiations are continuing between the AMCU and Sibanye Gold, the company is appealing over the heads of the union to the workforce to settle.

At the beginning of March, Sibanye offered a "peace and stability" deal of R4,500, a R5,000 company loan to be paid back over a year, re-employment of sacked miners, and jobs to relations of the miners killed during the dispute. The offer is derisory, as miners have lost substantially more in wages over the 100 days on strike.

Platinum-mining operations in South Africa supply over 80 percent of world demand.

South Africa KwaZulu Natal mortuary workers strike over unpaid wages and poor conditions

Workers at Magwaza Maphalala Mortuary in Durban, South Africa, came out on strike last week over unpaid overtime from December. Workers said the Health Department had broken a promise to rectify their December wages.

The mortuary workers previously struck on February 19 over rude work

colleagues whom they accused of being in league with management.

Public and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa and the National Education and Health Workers Union members have been striking throughout KwaZulu Natal province over unsafe conditions and being underpaid.

Nigerian Ogun state workers protest missing subscriptions

Nigerian public sector workers demonstrated Tuesday in Ogun State because workers' contributions are not being passed on to relevant bodies.

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) members say deductions from wages have not been paid for the last 105 months, despite the governor being reminded once last year and twice this year.

The NLC originally called the demonstration for the previous Friday. Thousands of workers gathering the day before booed and shouted insults at the governor. The NLC now says all grievances have been resolved, including the reinstatement of the NLC chairman sacked in 2017.

Nigerian judiciary workers continue strike over wages, promotions and arrears

Nigerian judiciary workers protested at Nasarawa state High Court by locking the chief judge in his headquarters in Lafia, the state's capital.

The Judiciary Staff Union members planned a three-day follow-up protest preventing anyone from going in or out of the court. They have been on strike since February 16 over wage reductions and lack of promotions for those with extra training. They are demanding payment of five years of promotion arrears.

Kenyan aviation workers strike met with state violence

Kenya's aviation workers came out on strike March 6 in opposition to a merger under present management of Kenyan Airports Authority (KAA) and Kenyan Airways (KQ), which could threaten jobs.

Pickets have been assaulted by security forces, who fired tear gas canisters as they rounded up Kenya Aviation Workers Union (KAWU) officials for calling an illegal strike. Stranded passengers asked why such

violence was used, as they also suffered tear gas inhalation.

The loss-making KQ is part owned by the state and 11 banks, and the takeover will incorporate Jomo Kenyatta airport, also part of the strike. Over the last 18 months, enormous payouts have been handed to the KQ executives and its managers.

Kenyan clinical officers' union calls off strike

The Kenyan Union of Clinical Officers (KUCO) suspended the week-long strike of clinicians in Nairobi for 30 days from Monday. They are beginning talks with the county governor.

The clinicians want full-time employment, overdue promotions, medical coverage and an expansion of the workforce.

The national KUCO leadership opposed striking over a 2017 collective bargaining agreement three weeks ago in return for union recognition by the government.

Namibian mineworkers continue strike against discrimination

Namibian mineworkers are continuing a wildcat strike that started February 22 over discriminatory conditions at the Scorpion Zinc Mine and Weatherly Mining Company.

The Mine Workers Union members are employed by Basil Read Mining as subcontractors to carry out blasting and rubble removal. Workers complain of racial discrimination and unfair practices over pay, housing and many other areas of work.

The dispute erupted when pay slips were posted on the company notice board by a wages clerk showing pay discrepancies for equal work favouring white workers. The clerk has been suspended along with workers who complained. Management refused to accept a petition from strikers.

Scorpion is the largest zinc operation in Africa, employing 1,900 workers.

Gambian school staff strike for improved wages and conditions

Staff at Gambia's Ndw's Comprehensive Upper Basic School in Kanifing went on strike February 27 over wages and conditions. Workers had previously written to the school principal with their demands for salaries and allowances to be increased, with no response.

The strike was taking place in a mock exam period with exams due in the coming months. Staff returned to work March 1 and are in discussions with the school administration.

Ghanaian mortuary workers strike over government's failed promises and lies

Ghanaian mortuary workers came out on strike March 5 across the country over poor working conditions. A Mortuary Workers Union (MWU) spokesman said they are tired of failed promises and lies by the

government.

Workers' demands include annual leave with pay, an end to excessive overtime and to be employed as permanent staff. They also want proper maintenance of mortuary equipment, supply of safety apparel and regular check-ups.

The bodies of the deceased are being kept alongside patients in hospitals, with those in the mortuary going without any service.

Europe

One-day strike by Scottish lecturers

Lecturers at colleges of further education in Scotland walked out on Wednesday. It followed similar action in January and February. The Educational Institute of Scotland-Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA) members are opposed to the 2 percent pay offer over three years made by the employers' association, Colleges Scotland.

The EIS put forward a proposition at the beginning of the week to suspend the strike. Described by the union as an offer "which didn't include additional money, but which would have allowed negotiations to continue," it was rejected by Colleges Scotland. The union said it is considering escalating the action by threatening to withhold student assessment results.

Scottish teachers to ballot on strike action

Teachers in Scotland are threatening strike action over pay. They have rejected a pay offer of 9 percent beginning in April to be implemented as a series of 3 percent pay rises over three years. They are also concerned about excessive workloads.

The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers will ballot its 7,500 members beginning March 18. It follows the decision by the largest Scottish teachers' union, EIS, to ballot its members.

Head teachers in Northern Ireland prepared to strike

An indicative vote among head teachers in Northern Ireland shows them willing to take industrial action to oppose ongoing attacks on education. They voted by a 93 percent majority for industrial action short of striking, while 58 percent voted to strike. Their grievances include demands for the provision of special needs education, workloads and the shortfall in school budgets. The ballot was held by the National Association of Head Teachers representing principals and vice principals in around 700 of the more than 1,000 Northern Irish schools.

Unions in talks with Birmingham Council to end UK refuse workers' strike

UK refuse workers in Birmingham began a series of twice-weekly strikes at the end of February, following a work-to-rule begun at the end of December.

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

An attempt by Birmingham City Council to end the strike through a court injunction last week ended in failure. Intense talks have been taking place this week between the council and the Unite union.

Planned strikes by UK offshore energy workers

Workers employed by North Sea oil subcontractors Akers and Petrofac are to hold five days of strikes on March 11, 19, and 27 and April 2 and 12. The subcontractors provide services to Total's offshore Elgin-Franklin, Alwyn and Dunbar platforms.

The Unite union members are opposing Total's move to a three-weeks-on three-weeks-off rota, meaning more time spent offshore. On Tuesday, the two subcontractors issued redundancy notices and began a process to terminate and re-engage the workers.

Unite members working at Total's onshore Shetland Gas Plant have set dates to strike March 13, 27, April 10, 24 and May 8 over the rostering issue.

Protest by UK minicab drivers in Luton

UK minicab drivers working for Addison Lee in Luton near London held a protest Tuesday. They carried out a go-slow, circling a roundabout near Luton airport. This followed a previous protest at Luton airport on February 4.

They are accusing the company of "sweatshop conditions" and demanding Luton Council, the minicab licensing authority, enforce their rights. The drivers say despite working 70 hours a week, they end up taking home around £225 a week after paying for fuel, vehicle rent, commissions and other deductions.

The protest was called by the United Private Hire Drivers branch of the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain.

Care workers at UK company hold 48-hour strike

Care workers employed by the UK Merseyside-based care charity Alternative Futures Group (AFG) held a 48-hour strike beginning 7 a.m. on Saturday. AFG, which employs 2,500 staff providing services to vulnerable adults across the UK, is to cut its sleep-in payments by £15 a night. Many workers will lose as much as £2,000 a year, leaving already low-paid workers struggling financially.

Around 650 AFG staff voted by a nearly 90 percent majority to strike. Some of the Unison union members attended rallies on Saturday, including 300 in Liverpool. Other rallies took place in Burnley, Rochdale and Tameside.

Strike vote by freight train drivers at two UK rail companies

Train drivers at two UK rail freight companies, Freightliner Intermodal and Freightliner Heavy Haul, voted by large majorities to strike. The Aslef union members are opposed to plans by the companies to make detrimental changes to their pension schemes. The two 24-hour strikes are planned for March 15 and 29.

Icelandic hotel workers' strike

Hotel workers in Reykjavik and other areas of Iceland are to hold a 24-hour strike today. The workers, who provide cleaning, housekeeping and laundry services in hotels and guest houses, are protesting low wages. Their union Efling has proposed a series of further strike dates in March and April with an all-out strike planned to begin May 1. Additionally, tour bus drivers in the Reykjavik area, VR union members, are to hold strikes in late March and early April over pay.

Irish ambulance drivers strike

Around 500 Irish ambulance drivers held 12-hour strikes on February 28 and March 1. This follows previous strikes on January 22 and February 15. The members of the National Ambulance Service (NAS), which is affiliated to the Psychiatric Nurses Association, are demanding the Health Services Executive recognise the NAS. The HSE recognises particular unions for collective bargaining negotiations.

Strike notice by workers at Irish finance company

Staff at offices of First Choice Credit Union in Ballyhaunis, Achill and Castlebar served notice Monday of their intention to strike March 15. The Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union members rejected a Labour Court recommendation. They are striking over basic pay, travel expenses and pay equality.

Underground protest by Ukrainian iron ore miners

On Tuesday, 35 Ukrainian miners at the Zoria iron ore mine and 77 at the Ternivskaya iron ore mine held underground protests. They are demanding the right to belong to an independent trade union and concerned over health and safety.

Middle East

Iranian teachers strike

A three-day strike by Iranian teachers began Sunday. Members of the Coordinating Council of Teachers Syndicates in Iran (CCTSI) at around 1,000 schools across 100 cities took part. Sit-ins were held in school principals' offices.

The teachers were protesting low wages, as they are paid below the national poverty line. Inflation, exacerbated by US sanctions, is robbing them of spending power. Previous strikes took place in October and November last year. In addition to pushing for higher wages, they are demanding the right to belong to independent unions and calling for the release of teachers imprisoned following earlier industrial action.

Israeli rail workers impose sanctions

Workers at Israel Railways began imposing sanctions Sunday. The 1,500 employees accuse management of cutting workers' jobs and hours, while increasing management jobs and raising their bonuses. The workers are boycotting courses for controllers and signalers, as well as restricting the supply of spare parts and equipment. Car drivers and administrative staff at the central hub of Lod are also striking.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact