

South African platinum miners may join gold miners' strike;
German Amazon pay strikes

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Africa

South African Sibanye Stillwater gold strike may spread to platinum mines

Faced with the possibility of South Africa's Sibanye Stillwater gold miners' strike spreading to the platinum mines, the company has raised a R10 billion "war chest."

Fifteen thousand Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) members have been out for almost five months for an annual wage increase of R1,000 a month over three years. Three other unions settled for what AMCU described as a "slave labour deal."

Wage negotiations are imminent in the platinum sector, where the AMCU have a clear majority of union members. In March, the union claimed it would call out workers at all South Africa's platinum and coal mines, but caved in to a court ruling.

The AMCU lost on appeal the determination that it has most members at Sibanye's gold mines, meaning the company can impose the inferior deal and ask the Labour Court to declare the strike illegal. Workers are also facing 7,000 redundancies.

The share sell-off to raise the war chest represented 5 percent of the company's value, which later saw a 14 percent fall in its share values.

Sibanye is in the process of acquiring Lonmin's platinum mines, making it the largest producer of the precious metal in the world. South African authorities responded to the 2012 strike by Lonmin platinum miners with deadly repression, leading to the murder of 34 miners during the notorious Marikana massacre.

South African steel strike continues; union calls off demonstration

A demonstration by striking steelworkers due outside the Johannesburg head office of South Africa's ArcelorMittal has been cancelled by the unions.

The 2,000 full-time and agency workers have been striking for four weeks to demand the company make casual workers permanent. A law brought in last year stipulates that casuals with over three months' continuous employment be brought onto the books. The workers are also demanding improved safety conditions.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) said it feared the company would get an indictment to ban the demonstration.

South African cell phone workers' wildcat strike banned by labour court

A wildcat strike by South African workers at the Cell C mobile phone company in Johannesburg, South Africa has been declared illegal by the labour court. The 380 workers came out on strike April 10 and picketed the company's campus. The company then suspended them.

Cell C settled a dispute in February over bonus payments for 2017 but then refused to sign a collective bargaining agreement without it being endorsed by a mediator. The company suspended all 1,000 Information Communication Technology Union members initially, but then said those who worked would not be disciplined.

Cell C is South Africa's third-largest mobile phone provider.

Renewed strike threat by South African Comair airline workers

Airline workers at South Africa's Comair are planning to strike on Thursday over wage disparities. The dispute by National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) members arose last year over 21 staff getting preferential wages over 683 others doing comparable work—from R600 to R6,700 more per month.

A previous strike went to the brink but was called off by NUMSA at the last moment without resolution. Comair operates for British Airways and Kulula at the country's airports.

Nigerian aviation workers' protest over unpaid redundancy called off by unions

A protest by Nigerian workers at Caverton Helicopters in Lagos and Port Harcourt over owed redundancy money and the right to picket has been called off by the unions. Caverton promised to pay the monies in five weeks.

Workers in five aviation unions complained the company called the police force to interfere with a peaceful picket over the same issue.

The unions have organised picketing at two other in-country flight operators, Newrest Aviation Services Limited and Serv Air, at the Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos, to demand union recognition.

Nigerian meteorologists oppose management dispersal of union officials

Meteorologists working at Nigeria Meteorology Agency (NiMet) have issued a strike ultimatum to management. They demand the rescinding of a rule allowing management to place union officials where they like or Association of Nigerian Aviation Professionals (ANAP) members will take industrial action. ANAP has given NiMet seven days to respond.

Hospital workers strike health centre in Uganda over lack of water

Ugandan health workers are striking at the Kakingol Health Centre III in Moroto District over the lack of water. Hospital workers have no direct supply and depend on patients collecting water from a river two kilometres away.

Nurses must use sand to absorb blood when mothers give birth, unless they bring water from home. The health centre previously collected rain water and stored it until a drought stopped the supply.

A delegation from the Ministry of Water visited the hospital in September and promised water in three months. Nurses say they will not return to work until they are connected to the mains supply.

Europe

German Amazon workers strike

Amazon workers at four fulfilment sites in Germany began a strike Monday, with some sites due to stay out until Thursday. The sites were Rheinberg, Werne, Bad Herfeld and Koblenz. Workers at other sites planned strikes over the Easter holiday.

The Verdi trade union members struck as part of a long-running dispute for their pay and working conditions to be brought into line with workers in other mail order and retail sectors.

Portuguese fuel delivery strike

Drivers delivering fuel in Portugal went on strike Monday to demand higher pay. The strike is beginning to bite, with supplies to hundreds of service stations drying up. The government has instructed drivers to supply fuel to airports, hospitals and essential services. Public transport operators in Lisbon and Porto announced they will run out of fuel within days and not be able to run services.

The 700 strikers are members of the National Union of Dangerous Goods Drivers founded last year.

Baggage handlers at two UK airports to strike over pay

UK baggage handlers and check-in staff working for GH London at Heathrow and Luton airports plan to strike. The airports serve the capital, London. The more than 300 Unite union members employed at Heathrow voted near unanimously to begin a four-day stoppage on Friday April 26.

The GH staff at Heathrow at Terminals 2 and 4 are protesting a six-year pay freeze and are demanding to be paid London's so-called living wage of £10.55 an hour.

In a separate dispute, around 120 GH London staff at Luton airport are to begin a one-week strike on Friday, April 26 over low pay. The Unite members previously struck in March, as a result of which GH London agreed a pay increase. However, the company has subsequently changed the pay structure to the detriment of the workers.

Rally at hospital in Barnsley, UK over payment schedule

Workers plan to rally next Wednesday outside the hospital in Barnsley, northern England to oppose cost-cutting plans by the multinational outsourcing company ISS. The workers, members of the GMB union, provide portering, cleaning and catering services. ISS intends to change its pay cycle pattern at the end of April, leaving many workers without pay between April 18 and May 9. The three-week gap with no pay will leave many of the low paid workers in dire straits.

In 2017, ISS paid out over £60 million in dividends to shareholders. The company's five directors shared a pay-out of £2 million.

Greek dockers set to strike

On Tuesday, Greek dockers announced a 24-hour strike to be held May 1. The PNO union members are protesting ongoing problems relating to pensions and collective bargaining terms. The strike is expected to affect voyages to the Greek islands.

Irish airline crew strike threat called off by union

Last week, around 100 cabin crew employed by Irish airline Stobart Air voted unanimously on an 84 percent turnout to strike. The Forsa trade union members are seeking pay and working conditions parity with other Irish airlines.

Stobart Air had previously refused to recognise unions but following the strike vote it entered talks with the union to avert the strike. Forsa then called the stoppage off.

An additional ballot would have to be held over any agreement reached by the union on pay and conditions. Stobart is under contract to Aer Lingus for flights between Ireland and the UK.

Irish ambulance crew to consider escalating action for union recognition

Around 500 Irish ambulance staff, members of the National Ambulance Service Representation Association (Nasra), are in dispute to demand trade union recognition. Nasra, affiliated to the Psychiatric Nurses Association (PNA), is pushing for recognition by the Irish Health Service Executive. To date they have held a series of 10-hour strikes.

A meeting on Thursday was to discuss holding 24-hour strikes or a series of rolling strikes. Their last 10-hour strike was held on April 10.

Irish hospital workers to ballot for national strike

A ballot of around 17,000 hospital support staff at all 36 hospitals across Ireland is to begin on April 22. The ballot has been extended to include porters, security staff and cleaners. Only 7,000 health care assistants and laboratory assistants were being balloted initially by the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU).

SIPTU members should—under the terms of the Lansdowne Road public service agreement signed in 2015—be entitled to pay increases of between €1,600 to €3,000 a year under a job evaluation scheme.

In a separate dispute, hospital chefs are also being balloted by SIPTU over pay.

Dutch refinery workers to extend strike

Dutch strikers at the Shell Pernis oil refinery in Rotterdam are to extend their action. The FNV trade union members began striking on April 8 in pursuit of an immediate 5 percent pay rise. Shell has offered 4.5 percent over two years.

The strike is also impacting the nearby Moerdijk chemical facility where it has led to lack of maintenance.

Romanian appliance workers strike continues

The strike by over 400 workers at the oven plant of Swedish multinational Electrolux in Satu Mare in Romania is now well into its second month.

The strikers are seeking a €3 a day pay increase. The company has offered €1 a day plus €1 a day attendance bonus. Currently, workers at the plant earn around €360 a month plus €400 in meal vouchers. This means many workers are paid below the living wage estimated to be needed for a family of two adults plus two dependent children.

Slovak steel workers strike

Workers at the US Steel Kosice (USSK) plant in Slovakia came out on strike on April 8 for a pay rise. USSK employs around 12,000 workers. The stoppage follows a series of fruitless talks since the beginning of the year in an attempt to reach a settlement.

Russian Ford workers hold rally for fairer compensation

Around 1,000 workers at the Ford-Sollers plant in Vsevolozhsk in the Leningrad area face losing their jobs when Ford closes its plant in July. On April 12, around 150 of the workers held a rally demanding fairer redundancy pay-outs. Under the current scheme, managers will be paid 100 times the compensation workers receive. To qualify for the full compensation, workers must not miss more than five days of work due to sickness, have any outstanding disciplinary sanctions against them, and, in addition, productivity levels must not fall.

Middle East

Sick-out protest brings Israeli rail system to halt

Rail services across Israel were brought to a standstill for about an hour on April 12. Eight traffic managers rang in sick and other managers refused to cover for them. For safety reasons the network was paused.

Following an intervention by the trade union federation Histadrut, rail services resumed after about an hour. In February, similar action took place when drivers and inspectors called in sick. That dispute was over concerns about a new work schedule.

Striking Moroccan temporary teachers hold rally

Moroccan teachers employed on a temporary basis have been on strike since March 3. Although paid the same rate as permanent teachers, they do not have the same pension rights and their right to move to other regions for employment are restricted. On April 10, striking teachers held a rally outside the education ministry in Rabat to promote their campaign.



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