

Miners' union sells out five-month long strike at Sibanye Stillwater in South Africa

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

26 April 2019

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

Miners' union sells out five-month long strike at Sibanye Stillwater in South Africa

The South African Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) has sold out the almost five-month pay strike of its 15,000 members at the Kloof, Beatrix and Driefontein gold mines.

A deal was agreed as AMCU platinum miners were threatening to join the strike over separate wage negotiations. The AMCU gold miners had been striking for an increase of R1,000 a month over three years. Instead, the deal agreed April 17 between AMCU and Sibanye Stillwater is the same as the “slave labour” deal signed with three other unions—the National Union of Metalworkers, Solidarity and UASA—plus an extra R4,000 payout. Some workers will get a monthly increase of R650 in the first year, R700 in year two and R825 in the final year, with the option of a R5,000 loan repayable to the company over a year.

The union is not opposing disciplinary action by the company against its members sacked while on strike. The AMCU has also committed to productivity increases to recover production lost during the strike and accepted the right of the company to carry out a restructuring programme that threatens nearly 7,000 gold mining jobs.

Sibanye is currently beginning a takeover of Lonmin—employer of the 34 striking miners massacred by police at Marikana in 2012—making it the world's largest producer of precious metal.

The AMCU has a clear majority in the platinum sector, where thousands of jobs are slated to go in the takeover. In March, the union claimed it would call out workers at all of South Africa's platinum and coal mines alongside the gold miners, but caved in to a court ruling banning the action.

South African Johannesburg casual health workers strike and demonstrate for permanent employment

On April 21, casual health care workers—long classified as “volunteers”—demonstrated on the streets of Johannesburg, South Africa, demanding permanent employment. Around 500 striking workers stopped

traffic in Gauteng province, demanding the government implement a commitment made last year to end their status as contract workers.

The National Union of Public Sector and Allied Workers members are also demanding the minimum monthly wage of R3,500 and the opportunity to progress up the grades to R12,000 a month.

A spokesperson for the provincial government said the issue of permanent employment for casual health workers was being dealt with by the government nationally, but “Unfortunately, the national fiscus is unable to absorb all 53,000 of them.”

Union calls off South African Comair strike after court ruling

A planned strike at airline company Comair called by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) was abandoned after the labour court declared it would make its ruling on Tuesday.

The strike should have gone ahead on Good Friday for maximum impact over the Easter holidays.

The dispute arose last year over 23 staff getting preferential wages over 683 others doing comparable work—from R600 to R6,700 more per month.

NUMSA is calling on the arbitration services to intervene and proposes three years for wage disparities to be eliminated.

South African cement workers strike over pay

Cement workers are on strike at the Pretoria Portland Company to demand a 12 percent wage and allowance increase.

The protected strike approved by the Commission for Consolidation Mediation and Arbitration began April 9. Management is refusing to negotiate with the recognised union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Workers are also complaining about the widening gap between management salaries and members' pay.

Pretoria Portland Company is the biggest cement supplier in South Africa.

Seven hundred Ethiopian clothing strikers sacked

Seven hundred Ethiopian workers have been sacked at Jonson Manufacturing Ltd. for striking. The company produces work-wear clothing.

The strikers protested on the streets April 7 and 8, demanding an improvement in working conditions. The National Clothing, Textile and Allied Workers Union members are complaining about unpaid overtime, long workdays, poor wages, irregular pay dates and unnecessary delays in severance pay for those who leave the company.

Jonson appealed to the labour court, which made the strike illegal.

Nigerian health workers strike over unpaid wages

Nigerian Medical Association members went on strike last week as they have received no pay since January.

Other health employees in the Joint Public Service Negotiating Council are expected to join the strike if the state has not paid their wages in two weeks.

Local government workers may also strike over wages and pensions unpaid for 54 months. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) gave a seven-day strike notice at the beginning of this month. The state governor has not responded.

The NLC says there is no reason for wages not to be paid, as the federal government has allocated the funds.

Nigerian civil servants protest 55 months of missing remittances and lack of promotions

Civil servants at Kwara State Water Corporation, Nigeria, demonstrated April 18 over dues deducted from wages not being transferred for the last 55 months.

The Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria and the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations members are also complaining about lack of promotions for the last nine years. Promotions were advertised last year but not financed.

The unions claim unpaid dues owed to the National Housing Fund and cooperative unions amount to Naira 43.4 million. A commitment by the state government to finance the missing monies in instalments has not been carried through.

Romanian appliance workers on strike for over two months begin protest march

A strike by around 400 workers at the Swedish-owned Electrolux appliance factory in Satu Mare in Romania is about to enter its third month.

On Monday, striking workers from the plant began a 600-km march to the Swedish embassy in Bucharest to publicise their demands. The strikers are demanding a pay rise. Many are paid at a rate below the living wage deemed necessary for a married couple with two children. They have rejected the latest offer by the company for a 12.7 percent pay rise over two years and are demanding an immediate 21 percent rise.

The union representing the workers, ALFA, is calling for a boycott of Electrolux goods.

Union calls off strike by Portuguese fuel drivers

A strike for higher pay, improved benefits and hours of work by around 700 fuel drivers in Portugal that began April 15 was called off on April 18.

The decision to end the strike followed 10 hours of discussions between the road hauliers' association ANTRAM and the National Union of Drivers of Hazardous Material. According to the *Portugal News* website, new negotiations will take place over the course of the year.

The fuel delivery drivers' strike was beginning to bite, with around half of the country's filling stations reporting being out or nearly out of fuel.

Catering staff at two UK hospitals to strike for pay parity

Around 70 catering staff employed by outsourcing company Sodexo at Doncaster Royal Infirmary and at Bassetlaw Hospital in Nottinghamshire are to strike May 1-3. The GMB and Unison union members are protesting poverty wages and are demanding they be paid in line with NHS-employed staff at the hospitals.

Unison has also called strikes for May 7-9, 15-17 and 20-22. The French-owned Sodexo made a £65 million profit last year.

Hospital security staff at Southampton strike over pay and safety

Staff working for outsourcing company Mitie Group who provide security at the Southampton General Hospital's A&E department held a 24-hour strike beginning 7 a.m. on Good Friday.

The second such action demanded that pay for security staff be raised from £9.50 an hour to £10.50 an hour, and for supervisors to be paid £12.16 an hour. They are also demanding enhanced security measures.

The Unite union members will also hold a 48-hour strike on May 3 followed by a 24-hour strike on May 24 and a 72-hour strike on June 7.

Academic staff at Winchester university balloted over job cuts

UK academics at the University of Winchester are being balloted for possible strike action in response to university plans to cut 55 jobs—48 teaching posts and 7 research posts.

The university is citing increased pension costs to justify culling around 10 percent of the workforce. Those balloted are members of the University and College Union (UCU). The ballot closes May 9.

In 2018, after 14 strike days, the UCU sold out the struggle by around 50,000 lecturers, librarians, administration staff and technicians to defend their pensions and conditions.

Low-paid UK hospital workers at Macclesfield protest wage delay

Low-paid staff working for outsourcing company ISS at Macclesfield District Hospital in northwest England held a protest outside the hospital on April 18. The GMB union members are opposing plans by ISS to change its payroll system.

ISS, which provides catering, cleaning and security services, wants to withhold one week's wages paid when a worker leaves the company. This means it will be three weeks before the already low-paid workforce of mainly women receive their next two weeks' pay. The delay in payment will cause financial hardship.

Irish ambulance crew confirm they will take further action over union recognition

Irish ambulance staff, comprising paramedics, advanced paramedics and emergency medical technicians, are to step up their strikes. Following a meeting on April 18, National Ambulance Service Representation Association (NASRA) members decided to hold a series of 24-hour strikes. They have previously held a series of six 10-hour strikes. NASRA is affiliated to the Psychiatric Nurses Association (PNA).

NASRA represents around 500 ambulance staff and is demanding recognition from the Health Service Executive. Currently, only the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union is recognised. Dates for the proposed 24-hour strikes will be announced at the PNA annual conference on May 2.

Russian Ford workers demand higher severance pay

Around 1,000 car workers at the Ford-Sollers car plant in Vsevolozhsk, which opened in 2002, are faced with losing their jobs when the factory closes in June. Ford also plans to close its two other car plants in Russia, leaving only one plant producing transit vans.

Hundreds of the Ford-Sollers workers attended a recent meeting at Vsevolozhsk town hall where they vented their anger. Ford-Sollers has offered redundancy packages of a year's pay. The Ford Primary Trade Union Organisation, representing about half the workforce, is calling for two years' pay, as is the norm in other Ford plants.

The union has not put forward any proposal to oppose the closure or join the fight of the Vsevolozhsk Ford workers with that of other Ford workers around the world facing job cuts. Workers face a bleak future, with very few well-paid jobs. Most vacancies in the area offer around US\$390 a month, half the average Ford pay.

Three-day protest by Moroccan teachers

Striking Moroccan teachers began three days of protests on Tuesday, marching through the capital, Rabat. The teachers from across the country's 12 regions have been on strike since February 20.

Teachers employed on a yearly contractual basis are demanding job security and the same pension rights as permanent staff.

An agreement to settle the dispute was signed on April 13, but a planned meeting between teachers' unions and the Ministry of National Education was cancelled. The government accused the teachers of negating the agreement by not returning to work. Teachers' representatives accused

the government of continuing legal action against the striking teachers.

A *Morocco World News* article of April 23 described teachers at the rally chanting, "We'll be here till integration" and "Our fight continues, we won't give up."



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