

UK Ryanair pilots vote to strike; South Africa's bank workers two-day national stoppage; Kenyan construction workers wildcat strike over pay and conditions

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.

Occupation by shipyard workers in Northern Ireland continues

Northern Irish workers at the Harland and Wolff shipbuilding yard in Belfast are continuing an occupation begun July 29 to save their jobs.

The current owners, Dolphin Drilling, were seeking a buyer because of ongoing financial problems of the parent company. The deadline for the sale has gone and the yard is now in the hands of administration firm BDO.

The yard employed 130 workers repairing and servicing oil rig structures. The Unite and GMB members are calling for its renationalisation. On Monday, the workers received their formal redundancy notices. Labour party Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell visited the yard on Monday and made an empty claim that a Labour government would have nationalised it.

Harland and Wolff has been in operation since 1861, and the Titanic ship was built there between 1909 and 1911. In its heyday, 30,000 workers found employment there.

UK Ryanair pilots vote to strike

UK-based Ryanair pilots have voted by an 80 percent majority on a 72 percent turnout to strike.

The British Airline Pilots' Association (BALPA) members will take a total of five days of strike action—two days on August 22 and 23 and then three days from September 2-4. The dates coincide with Ryanair's busy holiday period. A strike ballot result of Ryanair pilots based in Ireland is due today.

The pilots in the UK and the Irish Airline Pilots' Association members have many grievances, over pensions, loss of licence insurance, maternity benefits, allowances and pay structure.

BALPA general secretary Brian Strutton told the *Independent*, "It is imperative that we resolve this dispute urgently to avoid strike action. No pilot wants to spoil the public's travel plans but at the moment it seems

we have no choice."

Last week Ryanair announced it may cut 900 pilot and cabin crew jobs. It blamed the delay in the delivery of new aircraft for affecting the company's expansion plans as well as increasing costs and a fall in fares revenues.

Strikers at UK government business strategy office and Liverpool tax office plan joint action

An indefinite strike by outsourced cleaners and catering staff at the UK government department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in London is now in its fourth week. The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members are calling on their employer to pay the London living wage of £10.55 an hour.

Cleaners at the HMRC (tax) office in Liverpool in northern England are due to strike from Monday to Wednesday next week. The PCS members, employed by outsourcing company ISS, are pursuing a £10 an hour pay claim.

Some BEIS strikers plan to hold a joint march and rally with the Liverpool HMRC strikers next Tuesday in Liverpool.

Union calls off strike by London airport workers

Strikes by UK security and firefighting workers at Heathrow airport due Monday and Tuesday this week were called off at the last minute.

The 4,000 Unite union members had voted by an 88 percent majority to reject a 7.3 percent pay offer over two and a half years. Unite are putting a new offer, not made public, to their members.

Strikes planned for August 23 and 24 remain in place.

Rail staff at midlands rail company in England strike

UK rail staff at the East Midlands train company held a 24-hour strike

Saturday over pay and working conditions. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union members are due to hold a further 24-hour strike on Saturday.

Further action by health visitors in Lincolnshire, England

Health visitors employed by the eastern England Lincolnshire County Council are planning 48-hour strikes for August 15 and 19. They have already engaged in a nine-day stoppage—a first for the 58 Unite union members.

They are protesting pay rates and the erosion of responsibilities. They used to be employed directly by the NHS but were transferred to the county council in October 2017 and are paid around £2,000 less than prior to their transfer.

This week the health visitors have staged rallies throughout Lincolnshire in support of their campaign.

Strike threat by Portuguese lorry drivers

Portuguese lorry drivers are threatening to begin an indefinite strike on August 12. The National Union of Dangerous Goods Drivers (SNMMP) and the Independent Trade Union of Goods Drivers members are calling on the government and ANTRAM, the road hauliers' association, to implement a proposed new collective labour agreement. Under the agreement pay will rise to €1,800 by 2022.

In April, SNMMP drivers who transport fuel held a three-day strike. The stoppage led to fuel shortages at filling stations. The proposed strike would not only impact fuel supplies but also deliveries of fresh food.

Strike threat by Italian teachers

Five unions representing Italian teachers announced a possible national strike in the autumn at a press conference in Rome on Tuesday. They called on the Italian government to honour an agreement reached in April to end temporary teaching contracts along with other forms of precarious employment. They say unless the government accedes the strike will go ahead.

Mass protest at site of Turkish gold mine

On Monday, thousands of protesters marched onto a proposed mining site in Kirazli Atikhisar, in Turkey's Kaz mountains. The area is one of outstanding natural beauty.

The Canadian company, Alamos Gold, has contracted Turkish company East Biga Madencilik to clear trees in preparation to establishing the mine.

Initially, security guards tried to prevent the protesters accessing the site, but were overwhelmed by the sheer number of demonstrators. The protesters carried out a mass tree planting exercise in opposition to the destruction of trees the mine would produce.

Israeli rally to oppose deportation of Israeli-born children of foreign workers

Around 2,000 Israeli protesters rallied outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art on Tuesday. They were protesting the Interior Ministry's plans to deport around 50 children born to foreign workers while they were in the country.

Currently around 60,000 mainly female foreign workers are employed as caregivers. Around half of them are from the Philippines. Under Israeli regulations, foreign mothers must send their newborn babies home, or their visas will not be renewed.

South African bank workers to strike over mass job losses

South African bank workers are threatening a national strike action over mass job losses. SASBO—The Finance Union (formerly the South African Society of Bank Officials union), is calling for restraint.

Around 10,000 jobs are under threat. Currently adult unemployment in South Africa stands at 29 percent, with more job losses in the pipeline.

SASBO, which has 730,000 members, plans to hold a two-day strike, which would be the largest banking strike in 100 years. A union representative said if the two-day strike is not effective, they will extend the action and shut down the banking system.

South African public sector unions head off pay strike

A five-day wildcat strike by South African municipal workers in Tshwane municipality has been ended by the unions.

Angry workers had walked out and protested on the streets of Pretoria against blatant inequality in pay awards. Around 3,000 workers brought the country's administrative capital to a standstill.

Pay awards of 18 percent, based on an upgrading of Tshwane municipality, were given to leading municipal officials but not to the general workforce. The pay increase should have been distributed across the board.

The return to work was achieved by the South African Municipal Workers Union and Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union accepting a temporary pay-off and the cancellation of the exclusive pay increase.

Workers in different pay brackets will be receiving a one-off payment ranging downwards from R15,000 (\$1,000) for workers paid below R20,000 a month, to R7000 for employees above R30,000.

Workers told the press that the strike had been in vain and they had demanded an 18 percent pay increase.

A spokesperson for the authority said the cost of the package, R380 million, had not been budgeted for and will be reviewed in December, and a reduction in expenditure made accordingly.

Thirty other authorities say they are unable to pay wages and are in arrears on workers' payments for medical aid, funeral policies and pension fund benefits.

Union reneges on promised strike in South African car manufacturing industry

A threatened strike in the South African car manufacturing industry has been shelved in favour of more talks.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest union in the annual wage negotiations, said if four days of intensive bargaining, which ended on August 2, produced no agreement strike action would result.

Further negotiations, however, are said to be planned for August 12 in Pretoria to overcome an estimated fivefold gap that exists between the union's demands and the manufacturers' offer.

NUMSA is looking for a one-year 20 percent wage increase plus substantial increases in allowances and conditions, whereas the Automobile Manufacturers Employers Organisation (AMEO) has offered a 4.5 percent wage increase.

AMEO claims that the car market in South Africa has shrunk by 3.7 percent this year. The export of vehicles and car parts represent 14.3 percent of the country's exports.

South African workers and students oppose poor management and university conditions

University staff and students locked out management from the Pretoria Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University last week.

The reason for the strike is being kept quiet by the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union while negotiations continue. Reports suggest it is over management attitudes and infrastructure conditions at the university.

Students and union members together barred access to the university. The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology complained that the disruption could postpone the beginning of the 2019 academic year till 2020.

South African wood, paper and chemical workers to strike in demand for a living wage

Workers in South Africa's wood, paper and chemical industries are threatening to strike for an increased wage offer.

The Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union (CEPPWAWU) and the Chemical Bargaining Council and the Wood and Paper Bargaining Council meetings failed to get a resolution brokered by arbitration service CCMA.

CEPPWAWU are asking for a 9.7 percent annual increase, with a 20 percent premium for working unsociable hours, plus paid maternity leave. Some employers have offered a 6 to 6.5 percent pay rise while some have offered nothing.

South African Spar shop workers strike over pay and conditions

South African workers employed at the Spar shop in Louis Trichardt, Limpopo, walked out on July 31 demanding a 10 percent pay rise and improved working conditions.

Around 40 South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union members demonstrated outside the store.

Other demands are for transport from work after 6pm and to be

informed when uniforms are being replaced, as workers have to pay for them. They also want facilities available to management to made available to shop staff.

Current pay is the minimum wage of R3,200 (\$210) a month, which is not enough to live on.

South African teachers protest for full-time employment and grading

Workers categorised as grade R teachers demonstrated outside the department of education in Pietermaritzburg South Africa Wednesday last week.

The 30 or so teachers were demanding a pay increase, inclusion in the 1 to 12 grading system, a better working environment and bursaries for untrained teachers. Their demand for inclusion in the 1 to 12 grading system would put them on the books, giving entitlement to associated benefits. A department of education official said their grievances had been noted.

Strike by Guinea Bissau public sector workers called off

Thousands of public sector workers in Guinea Bissau returned to work last Friday after the unions reported an agreed pay rise.

Workers had come out on a ten-day strike demanding a wage increase of 59,000 CFA (West Africa Franc). The strike affected news outlets, closing down much of the media, including public radio, television and some newspapers.

The present monthly wage is 19,200 CFA, and the union said the government had agreed to pay 50,000 CFA from September.

Guinea Bissau's Prime Minister qualified this, saying the pay increase has been "accepted in principle" by all parties but, "We are still in negotiations."

Kenyan construction workers wildcat strike over pay and conditions

Kenyan workers downed tools and walked off the multi-billion-shilling Thwake Dam construction site last week over pay and working conditions.

Around 900 workers went on wildcat strike protesting poor wages, lack of clean water and toilets, transport to the site and uncontrolled dust conditions.

The government led by Uhuru Kenyatta declared the strike illegal and threatened a stern response from police if strikers interfered with anyone returning to work. The government has threatened to dismiss any worker refusing to return to work.

The Chinese company, Gezhouba Group, claimed many of the contentious issues were caused by language problems and that the wage rates being paid were agreed with the government.

Kenyan public sector workers threaten strike over unpaid wages

Kenyan public sector workers are threatening to strike as none of the 47

counties they work for have paid employees their July wages. The counties blame a disagreement over the division of the revenue bill for the delay in payment.

The Kenya County Government Workers Union (KCGWU) has threatened a strike from next Tuesday. The Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Union and the National Union of Nurses said they will support a strike by the KCGWU.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)