Slovenian pilots strike; Paris, France rail and metro strike

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

13 September 2019

Slovenian pilots take strike action

Pilots in Slovenia at Adria airways walked out for three days, from September 8 to September 10, after their collective bargaining agreement expired. More strikes are planned from September 18 to September 20, and September 30 until October 2.

The Slovenian Pilots Union members work up to 30 scheduled flights, five more than agreed, leading to fatigue, stress and sickness. Duty times have been extended as well as out-of-base operations.

Pilots' union leader Luka Radovic said the union have been pressing the company for talks since last summer. "The flexibility we provide to the company is quite high compared to previous years," he said. "We also work more than fifty hours a week and Adria has been breaching the collective agreement for some time".

The last two-day stoppage by pilots was in March 2017. Cabin crew are also considering industrial action.

French transport workers to shut Paris Metro and Rail

The transport system in French capital Paris will halt Friday due to a planned stoppage by transport workers.

The CGT, UNSA, CFE-CGC, Sud, Solidaire and FO union members are protesting plans by the Macron government to reform pensions. Workers such as transport workers who now can retire at 55 on full pension will be badly hit, as the new system links pensions to number of years worked.

More stoppages are planned.

Scottish workers at Diageo drinks giant to hold nine-day strike

Workers at Diageo's 19 sites across Scotland are to hold a nine-day stoppage over pay. In August, the GMB's nearly 1,000 members voted by 80.5 percent to strike over pay.

The action from September 17 until Friday September 27 will disrupt the production of brands including Johnnie Walker, Gordon's and Smirnoff.

The planned stoppage follows the collapse of talks at Acas, after Diageo refused to improve on its 2.8 percent pay offer. Company pre-tax profits for 2018 were more than £4.2bn. The company gave a 30 percent pay rise to chief executive Ivan Menezes—total pay £11.7m.

UK Royal Mail workers prepare for national strike ballot

Royal Mail workers staged rallies across the UK Tuesday ahead of a national strike ballot to run from September 24 to October 15.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) members are opposing plans by Royal Mail bosses to split the company into a parcel delivery firm and letter delivery service, which will be run down. Up to 40,000 jobs are at threat.

In the run up to the privatisation of Royal Mail in 2013, the CWU shut down strikes and agreed to closures under the guise of modernisation.

Employees of Royal Mail chief executive Rico Back's European parcels company GLS work up to 13 hours a day and have to drive while fatigued.

Lecturers at UK Universities ballot for action over pensions, pay and conditions

Lecturers at over 147 universities across the UK are balloting for strike action over pay and casualisation. At 69 of them, they are balloting to defend their pensions. Over the last decade, the pay of the 125,000 University and College Union (UCU) members has declined in real terms by 21 percent.

Last year, the UCU sold out a 14-day strike by 50,000 lecturers, librarians, administration staff and technicians over pensions. This led to motions of no-confidence in UCU general secretary Sally Hunt, who later stood down from the union leadership.

The balloting closes on October 30.

Strike at UK government offices enters second week

Receptionists, security guards, porters and postroom staff at the UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in London are in the second week of their strike, begun September 2. The workers are demanding the London living wage of £10.55 an hour and sick pay.

From September 30 the strike will resume with rolling action, one week on, one week off.

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) members joined caterers and cleaners at BEIS on indefinite walkout since July 15. The PCS organised food bank donations for the strikers at BEIS offices.

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Computer staff at UK Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency to strike

UK computer staff at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency plan to take rolling strike action strike action from September 19.

The PCS members based in Nottingham and Swansea are demanding overtime pay, payment for out of hours work, and more consultation from management.

The workers are responsible for maintaining IT systems for booking and allocating tests, incident management and new staff training.

Scottish bus drivers in Glasgow ballot for strike action

Bus drivers at First Glasgow, Scotland are to be balloted for strike action. This follows a consultative ballot, in which workers voted 97.5 percent to oppose the imposition of new service routes by the company.

The changes due in October, which include cuts to routes and recovery time for drivers, will increase profitability ahead of the sale of the company. First group announced in May that it will sell all its UK operations.

Unite union officials are complaining that they were not consulted on the changes.

Union calls off UK waste workers' strike in Mid Sussex

The GMB union called off a planned strike for September 5 by UK waste and recycling workers at Serco Environmental Services Bridge Road Depot, Haywards Heath, Mid Sussex.

The workers walked out after the company refused a proposed 15 percent pay increase.

After talks at the government arbitration service, Acas, the GMB accepted a sell-out deal—including a one-off sum of £250, improved sickness policy, the right to collective bargaining and bringing forward the next pay review to April 2020 from August 2020.

UK Asda workers oppose new contract

Asda workers across England will demonstrate outside Asda supermarkets on September 16 to protest the imposition of a new contract.

The GMB members say Contract 6 stipulates flexible working times—creating problems for working parents. Long service holidays will go, plus bank holiday premiums.

Asda are threatening its employees with dismissal if they do not sign the contract within 12 weeks.

UK museum and library staff ballot for action against cuts

Museum and library workers in Bradford, England will be balloted for strike action against massive cuts in services.

The 50 Unite members are opposing £500,000 of cuts from the museums and galleries budget for 2020/2021—currently, £1.8 million, by £500,000 in 2020/21.

The libraries budget, currently £2,824,000, will lose £1.5 million.

Balloting will begin September 13 until September 27. Workers voted by 79 percent in a consultative ballot to move to a strike ballot.

A spokesperson for Bradford Labour party led council said, "By 2020-21 we will have delivered over £300 million of reductions in the ten years since 2011."

Spanish airline workers at Iberia strike threat

All workers at the Spanish airline Iberia are poised to take strike action.

The UGT union announced imminent action after Iberia withdrew from negotiations of the XXI Collective Land Agreement. The company cited recent strikes at airports of Barcelona, Bilbao and Madrid, and Malaga as the reason.

The company offer included a 2.5 percent rise for 2018, two percent for 2019, and a salary increase linked to company profits for 2020 and 2021.

Jordanian teachers walk out

Teachers in Jordan went on strike on Sunday in protest over the fact that a demonstration in Amman Thursday was prevented from reaching the prime minister's office. Hundreds of police were mobilised, closing off the roads and using teargas against demonstrators.

On Thursday, 35,000 teachers walked out across the country to demand a 50 percent salary increase promised five years ago.

One teacher said with additions for family support his salary was 425 dinars, compared to the average monthly rent of a three-bedroom property, 314 dinars.

Unemployment in Jordan registered at 19 percent for the first quarter in 2019, higher for graduates at 26 percent for men and 78 percent for women. Last June saw mass protests against austerity and proposed tax rises.

South African motor industry workers threaten stoppage

South African motor industry workers are threatening to strike over pay.

The National Union Metal workers (NUMSA) members are demanding a 12 percent annual increase for 306,000 petrol station attendants, vehicle sales employees and car component producers, plus travel allowances for petrol attendants. Petrol attendants get the minimum wage of R20 an hour.

The Motor Industry Bargaining Council (MIBICO) is offering a three-year deal at five percent each year. MIBICO's agreement would incorporate a "peace clause," meaning outstanding issues like travel allowances will not be negotiated.

Negotiations under the arbitration services collapsed seven weeks ago but NUMSA proposed more meetings with MIBCO over the next three weeks before any action will be taken.

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Kenyan county health workers resume strike over unpaid wages

Health workers in Kisumu County, Kenya planned to walk out Wednesday over unpaid wages.

The 4,000 Kenyan National Union of Nurses (KNUN) members took action in August. That three-week strike ended when nurses received half pay for July.

Wages for May and June went unpaid. The county government said a disagreement at the federal level underlay the failure to pay public sector employees.

Zimbabwe doctors strike for a living wage

A strike by doctors across Zimbabwe's hospitals began on September 3.

A nurse at Harare Central Hospital reported that senior doctors had joined the stoppage alongside junior doctors.

With inflation raging at 200 percent, and the increase to monthly pay between 55 percent and 76 percent, doctors cannot afford travel costs. Fuel prices are rising at 900 percent annually, and food 500 percent.

The International Monetary Fund warned President Emmerson Mnangagwa not to increase pay. The government said the strike is illegal as hospitals constitute essential services.

South African miners in dispute with employers

South African platinum mineworkers have declared a dispute with their employers.

The Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) members put in an initial claim for a 48 percent pay increase with Anglo American Platinum and Sibanye Stillwater Platinum. The AMCU will likely go to arbitration with government arbitrator CCMA.

The AMCU sold out the almost five-month pay strike of its 15,000 members at Sibanye Stillwater gold mines in April, at the point when platinum miners were threatening to join the dispute.

Sibanye took over Lonmin in June—employer of the 34 striking miners massacred by police at Marikana in 2012—making it the world's largest producer of precious metal.

South African SANParks workers prepare to strike for wage increase

Workers at South African National Parks (SANParks) are preparing a further walkout over pay. Previous strikes were over unsocial hours payment, which was not resolved.

The Health and Other Services Personnel Trade Union of South Africa (HOSPERA) members are demanding an eight percent pay rise to SANParks offer of 6.5 percent. The eight percent figure was agreed by the unions after the intervention of the CCMA arbitration services but SANParks refused to budge.

SANParks employs around 5,000 workers at 21 parks, including field rangers, field guides, petrol attendants, receptionists and hut attendants.

Unions and management were set to meet Wednesday to finalise strike arrangements.

South African government interns demonstrate for jobs

Around 400 South African government interns marched September 3 to the offices of Eastern Cape head of state. They are demanding jobs or funds for start-up businesses at the end of their internship.

Interns are university-educated students who expect government jobs, or to provide government services through self-employment. They cover for government employees on sick leave for a fraction of their wages, around R2,500 to R5,000 a month.

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