

Croatian education workers strike continues, Zimbabwe doctors on strike for two months

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Croatian educators continue strikes

Around 700 education staff including lecturers and non-teaching staff at Croatian tertiary education facilities were to strike Wednesday. Primary and secondary school teachers in Split and Virovitica counties were to join them, in a programme of rotating strikes. The workers are demanding a pay increase to bring them in line with civil servants.

On Monday union representatives for primary, secondary and tertiary education walked out of negotiations after government representatives refused to give a timetable for how talks over pay for staff carrying out more complex duties would proceed. The union representatives also refused an interim proposal for such payments made by the Croatian People's Party.

March by Greek public sector workers against privatisation

Hundreds of public sector workers marched through Athens on October 24 to protest the Greek government's proposed bill to outsource municipal services. Services to be privatised include street cleaning and rubbish collection.

Demonstrators shouted "No to the sell-off of services." The growth bill to push through privatisations by the New Democracy government was to be discussed that day. New Democracy came to office in July. It followed four years of EU-dictated austerity cuts imposed by the Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) government.

Widespread strikes in Italy

On October 25 and 26, hundreds of workers employed by 18 civic companies in the Italian capital Rome held four-hour strikes.

They were protesting mismanagement by the city authorities. They blame Virginia Raggi, a member of the Five Star Movement, elected mayor of the city in June 2016. Services affected included rubbish collection, schools and transport systems comprising buses, trains and trams.

Over the last few years, Rome has suffered backlogs of rubbish collection and breakdowns of buses as a result of poor maintenance. The

metro stations have closed for weeks on end as a result of escalator breakdowns.

The strikes in Rome on Friday coincided with strikes by Italian airline staff. Ground handling staff and air traffic controllers at Air Italia held four- and 24-hour strike actions. Around 200 flights were cancelled. The stoppages protested pay and working conditions.

Protest by Ukrainian miners in Kiev

Ukrainian coal miners employed by the state-owned mining company were to hold protests on Tuesday outside the parliament building in Kiev. They are demanding wage arrears owed to 30,000 miners. The government has set aside \$47 million to pay the arrears but the miners are demanding immediate payment.

The Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine and the Trade Union of Coal Industry Workers of Ukraine members held protests in the Donbas, Luhansk, Lviv and Volyn regions of Ukraine over the last few months. Some miners are owed arrears going back to 2016.

Staff at 25 sixth-form colleges in UK set to strike

Staff at 25 UK sixth-form colleges are to strike November 5. They held a previous strike on October 17 and a rally in London.

The National Education Union members are protesting cuts in funding that have led to low pay and poor conditions. Between 2010-11 and 2016-17 funding fell by 22 percent in real terms. Over the same period, the number of teachers fell by 15 percent while student numbers rose 6 percent.

Further strike planned at Nottingham College in England

UK lecturers at Nottingham College are to take three days of strike action next week with a four-day walkout the following week. Further strike dates are planned for the rest of the month. It follows previous strike action.

After merging New College Nottingham and Central College Nottingham, the college management sought to impose new contracts. Those refusing to sign were threatened with dismissal. Under the new contracts staff could end up £1,000 a year worse off, have their holiday entitlement cut and face a more intense workload. The University and College Union (UCU) accuses the college management of renegeing on a promise to limit teaching hours to 24 hours a week.

College staff at Nottingham, along with other college lecturers, have seen their pay eroded, not having had a pay rise since 2010. They voted to hold a further 15 days of strikes throughout November.

Strike ballots are underway at the UK's 147 universities involving 120,000 lecturers. More than half the UK's lecturers are on short-term contracts. In 2018, the UCU sold out the lecturers' dispute and accepted an inferior pension.

Further strike by UK library and museum staff in Bradford

UK library and museum staff working for Labour-controlled Bradford council are to hold a further stoppage next week. They plan to walk out for three days from Tuesday. The Unite union members work at 14 library and museum sites across the Bradford metropolitan area. A further four-day strike is planned from November 18 and a five-day strike beginning December 2.

The workers held a two-day strike beginning October 21. They also held a demonstration in the city centre, carrying a coffin effigy bearing the slogan "No cuts to culture."

The Unite regional organiser said he was realistic about job losses and would accept voluntary redundancies.

Bradford council workers face a 65 percent budget cut over two years to 2020 amounting to £760,000, threatening the existence of prestigious sites such as Bradford Industrial Museum, Cartwright Hall Gallery and the Bolling Hall Museum. The ancient Bolling Hall building is registered in the Domesday Book.

While the Labour Party-run council is slashing spending on culture, it is spending £1.4 million on its application to be considered the City of Culture.

Library staff in south east London enter fifth month of strike

Around 50 UK library workers at Bromley council in southeast London have been on strike since June 6. The Unite union members are protesting staff levels and conditions.

The workers are employed by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), a social enterprise company. The library service was put into the hands of GLL by the Tory-controlled Bromley council.

Three-day strike by Irish road safety monitoring workers

Workers employed by the Irish speed camera van operator GoSafe began a three-day strike Saturday. They were protesting the imposition of a new rota for workers.

The strikers are also demanding the company recognises their union, the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU). The strike

coincided with a three-day public holiday weekend. On Sunday, SIPTU organiser Brendan Carr called on the Irish government's Transport Minister Shane Ross to intervene to resolve the dispute. SIPTU has said it may call an indefinite strike if the company does not respond to the workers' demands.

Strike by staff at Israeli embassies

Diplomatic and military attaché staff at almost 70 Israeli embassies and more than 20 consulates around the world began strike action on Wednesday. It led to the closure of the embassies and consulates.

They are in a long-running dispute about expenses paid to diplomatic staff. The Ministry of Finance is imposing cuts in expenses and is seeking to backdate the cuts, meaning embassy staff paying back thousands of dollars.

Strike by Algerian judiciary

Judges and prosecutors in Algeria began an open-ended strike on Sunday. They are protesting a reshuffle of posts, which will affect half of the 6,000 judiciary personnel.

The country is in the midst of anti-government protests leading up to the planned elections in December to replace the highly discredited longstanding President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Bouteflika was forced to stand down in April after he planned to run for a fifth term.

The strike is having an impact on court hearings as 96 percent of the judiciary have supported the action. Magistrates play an important role in overseeing elections. The judiciary see the planned reshuffle as an encroachment on their prerogative.

Zimbabwe doctors' two-month stoppage continues

Zimbabwe's doctors are continuing their stoppage, now two months long, in the face of the government's refusal to pay the public sector in US dollars.

Inflation is running at around 500 percent and the prices of basics like cooking oil, sugar and maize are rising at least once a week. The Apex Council revealed that 230,000 public sector workers cannot afford to travel to work.

The finance ministry said it would go bankrupt if it paid wages in US dollars. The exchange rate is 15 Zimbabwe dollars to one US dollar, which would mean that instead of a salary equivalent to US \$67, doctors would be paid US \$475 a month.

The Zimbabwe Nurses' Association agreed a deal with the government to accept a 60 percent pay increase, promises of promotions, a pension fund for nurses working in mission hospitals, and houses and car loans from the government.

President Emerson Mnangawa is privatising the public sector under an IMF-dictated programme including thousands of redundancies.

Nearly a million Zimbabweans, 11 percent more than last year, depend on food aid.

Nigerian minimum wage not implemented, still no strike call from unions

Nigerian state governors met on Monday and announced they would not implement a minimum wage deal agreed between the unions and federal government on October 18.

Three labour congresses called off a threatened general strike based on the N30,000 minimum wage being implemented. They have not renewed the strike call.

A representative from the states said that any deal done by federal government only applies to federal government workers, not to state workers. State governors however say they agree with the N30,000 minimum wage but have to negotiate pro-rata increases for higher grade incomes.

A Nigeria Labour Congress spokesman said, "We want our workers to be committed and increase productivity," suggesting the unions will agree to a productivity deal.

South African student enrolment workers strike for permanent jobs and bonuses

South African employees managing the National Students Financial Aid Scheme walked out on Monday. The National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) members are demanding that casuals are made permanent and the introduction of bonus and pension schemes.

Negotiations broke down between the employer's organisation, the National Bargaining Forum and the union. The CCMA arbitration services awarded NEHAWU a strike certificate.

Management say the action will have no effect as students apply online. They intend to implement a no-work, no-pay diktat.

South African university workers strike over health and safety

Staff at the University of South Africa walked out last week claiming the campus breaches health and safety regulations.

The NEHAWU members claim that many of the university buildings, accommodating a third of all South African students, are unsafe to work in and do not comply with occupational health and safety standards.

Staff are barred from entering the buildings. Some university work is being conducted online while negotiations proceed between management and union.

South African workers striking over unpaid wages arrested

Striking South African public sector workers were arrested by police for assault and kidnap. On October 16, after a special council meeting, workers prevented a Democratic Alliance councillor from leaving for around three hours until he gave assurances over their pay. The councillor suffered broken fingers and bruised ribs.

The North West Bojanala Platinum District Municipality employers have not paid the higher grade workers their September wages due to mismanagement of funds.

South Africa Finance Minister Tito Mboweni made a speech Monday in parliament saying public sector wages must be cut to gain credibility with international financial investors and to prevent public services collapsing.

The South African National Union of Mineworkers is planning a march against the dismantling of the public energy supplier.

South African firefighters in court case following suspension

A South African firefighters' dispute has gone to court. Twenty percent of Johannesburg firefighters remain suspended for refusing to attend fires while working to contract.

The Demawusa union members were suspended on October 8 for refusing to work on callouts without a safety officer as stipulated in their contract. The union claims the Emergency Management Services are violating regulations.

The authority is breaking a collective bargaining agreement by paying the suspended workers only part of their wages.

A work-to-rule by firefighters in Cape Town around the same time as the Johannesburg firefighters were suspended was called off by the South African Municipal Workers Union following a labour court ruling.

Former Nigerian bank workers protest unpaid compensation

Former Nigerian bank workers, many of them pensioners, protested outside the Union Bank head office in Marino, Lagos State, at the weekend.

Around 100 protesters representing 600 workers who lost their jobs in 2013 claim 23 died as a result of hardship suffered over unpaid compensation. The older workers and pensioners cannot afford the cost of health treatment to alleviate their ailments.



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