

Steel strike at Tata in the Netherlands against job losses; South African police fire stun grenade at workers protesting over unequal pay and conditions; nurses on strike in Zimbabwe over pay

## Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

3 July 2020

### Further strike by Dutch steelworkers

Steelworkers at the Tata steel plant in IJmuiden, the Netherlands, held an eight-hour strike Sunday, following a one-day strike on June 26. The FNV union members are opposing 1,000 job cuts, equating to more than 10 percent of the workforce.

The workers have taken days of action since June 10 over Tata's plans. The strike on Sunday followed the breakdown of talks. The union only proposed that job cuts be postponed, until October 2026. Tata said it needs more time to examine the union's proposals.

Sunday's action led to the delay of a shipment of steel from the site to its Port Talbot plant in South Wales, where 500 jobs are threatened.

In November, Tata confirmed plans to cut around 3,000 jobs across Europe. Like many firms internationally, Tata is utilising the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to impose further restructuring.

### Ukrainian workers demonstrate against anti-union laws and wage arrears

Ukrainian workers protested Tuesday in the Maidan against a draft anti-labour law introduced in the Ukrainian parliament in May, and to demand payment of wage arrears.

The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine members marched to the Ukrainian parliament and office of the president.

The law would restrict the number of trade unions allowed to operate within a workplace and sets a minimum membership figure.

### Protest by City Jet airline workers in Ireland

Pilots working for City Jet held a protest outside the company's Dublin headquarters in Ireland June 23. The Irish Airline Pilots' Association (IALPA) members were protesting the company's plans to shut down its Dublin base with the loss of 57 pilots' jobs.

IALPA, part of the Forsa trade union, offered concessions in return for retaining some pilot jobs. Forsa is ready to accept a 50 percent pay cut

until April next year and the tearing up of all current terms and conditions to enhance flexibility.

### Security staff at UK hospital plan strike

Hospital security staff at outsourcing company Engie at Tameside General Hospital, Greater Manchester, are to hold a 48-hour strike July 13. The Unison union members are seeking pay parity with other hospital workers directly employed by the National Health Service (NHS). The Engie workers claim they earn £2,000 to £3,000 a year less than their NHS colleagues.

### Strike ballot of drivers at UK haulage company

Around 60 UK drivers at haulage firm Goldstar Transport based at Woolpit, Suffolk, in England are being balloted for strike action. The ballot will close on July 14. The Unite members are opposed to company plans to close the Woolpit depot and make 12 drivers redundant and offer transfers to 85 drivers to its Felixstowe depot 33 miles away.

According to Unite, the planned closure followed the union requesting official recognition. The drivers also have concerns over health and safety issues during the pandemic and detrimental changes to terms and conditions introduced in April.

### Iranian workers jailed for protests

On Wednesday, 42 workers who were employed by Azarab Industries in Iran were sentenced to a year in prison, a month's hard labour and 74 lashes. They had taken part in protests against non-payment of wages for May and June this year and charged with public order offences.

Azarab workers held similar protests in October last year when 21 were arrested.

The workers had protested against the previous privatisation of the

company. Azarab is a construction company employing around 2,500 that specialises in the building of power plants, oil refineries and sugar refineries. Workers complain that privatisation has led to their wages and benefits declining and regular delays in payment of their wages.

Workers at the Haft Tappeh sugar factory are also fighting to reverse its 2015 privatisation, after seeing their wages and conditions deteriorate.

### **South African police fire stun grenade at workers protesting over unequal pay and conditions**

On Monday, outsourced municipal workers in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, South Africa, protested outside a council meeting to demand permanent employment.

The 150 Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Union of South Africa members, including security guards, meter readers and seasonal workers, receive less pay than workers employed directly by the municipality.

After the workers refused to disperse, police fired a stun grenade into their ranks and arrested three people.

### **South African Cell C mobile phone workers plan strike to protect jobs**

Workers at a mobile phone company in Johannesburg, South Africa, threatened to walk out if management do not reverse their decision to make redundancies.

The Information Communication Technology Union members are fighting to prevent a 40 percent cut in the workforce at Cell C, South Africa's third largest mobile operator.

### **Protesting South African health care workers force management to decontaminate hospital**

South African health care workers at Cecilia Makiwane Hospital (CMH) in East London, Eastern Cape, protested on June 23 and 24, threatening to shut down the hospital in response to management's handling of COVID-19.

Three hospital workers died recently after contracting the virus, and 72 workers have tested positive. The situation is mirrored across the entire Eastern Cape, and at other hospitals in the province, nurses, porters and cleaners have refused to work in increasingly dangerous conditions and without adequate protection.

At CMH, workers only resumed duties when management agreed to a decontamination of the whole hospital.

South Africa confirmed 151,209 coronavirus cases and 2,657 infections.

### **Thousands of nurses stop work in Zimbabwe**

Thousands of nurses in Zimbabwe are on strike to demand a salary that will pay their bills and cover the cost of food.

The Zimbabwe Nurses' Association with 15,000 members issued a statement saying, "The Z\$3,000 average [monthly] salary we earn is not sufficient to cover basic needs without even adding the costs required to attend work." Even to fill a car with petrol would cost more than a month's salary.

Zimbabwe is in a severe economic crisis and inflation is running at nearly 800 percent, so salaries quickly become worthless. The government's response to the previous strike by doctors and nurses in March was a monthly allowance of US\$75 in addition to a 50 percent salary increase, but this failed to address the problem.

The public health care system lacks basic drugs and equipment and sometimes even running water.

There were 574 COVID-19 infections with seven deaths in June compared to 132 cases in May.

### **Strike by civil servants in Nigeria's Cross Rivers State in opposition to trade union body**

Civil servants in Cross Rivers State, Nigeria, went on strike June 29 despite opposition from the Trade Union Congress (TUC), one of the two federal union bodies.

The strikers' demands include payment of outstanding benefits to retirees dating back as far as 2014; putting promised promotions into practice; rescinding of the deletion of genuine employees from the payroll; and immediate addition to the payroll of 2,000 workers recruited since 2018 who have not yet been paid.

The larger Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) denounced the state government for ignoring its entreaties for talks and avoiding a strike. The NLC Chairman for Cross River said, "Workers' issues presented to government have been ignored. Even some issues that organised labour have reached agreement on have all been abandoned and rejected by the government." Some NLC members died after being removed from the state government payroll.

Civil servants refused to show up at work, despite government threats that were backed by the TUC.

### **Union orders striking doctors at teaching hospital in Niger back to work**

Resident doctors at the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital (NDUTH) in Bayelsa State were told by the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD) to return to work despite no agreement having been reached or any shift in the employers' position.

The doctors are demanding an end to the disparity in earnings between doctors working in federal- and state-owned health institutions as they are not placed properly on the salary scale. They want enhanced hazard allowances, upgraded equipment and an end to staff shortages.

The doctors at NDUTH stayed out on strike after the national leadership of their union directed members to resume work on June 22. The ARD cited its "good faith" in management, saying it would "give them the benefit of doubt for three weeks."

### **Medical doctors and nurses in Ondo State, Nigeria, on all-out stoppage over non-payment and lack of personal protective**

## equipment

Doctors at the University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital Complexes in Akure, Ondo State, and nurses began indefinite strike action June 24 against the state government due to non-payment of salaries and entitlements. The National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives are also demanding personal protective equipment to stop the spread of COVID-19.

There are 25,694 coronavirus cases with 590 fatalities in Nigeria.

## Medical doctors in Lagos State, Nigeria, preparing to strike in July

Medical doctors in Lagos State, Nigeria, are planning a three-day strike July 13, upon the expiry of a two-week ultimatum to the state authorities. Issues include pay, staff shortages, COVID-19 protection and training.



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