

# 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.*

## French operating theatre nurses strike for salary increase

Operating theatre nurses at hospitals across France took part in stoppages on Tuesday, demanding higher salaries in recognition of their responsibility and amount of training.

The strikes and rallies were called by the Stalinist General Confederation of Labour (CGT) union to denounce a situation in which, according to *France Bleu*, newly graduated nurses are paid less than 2,000 euros per month.

Earlier this month, nurses in intensive care units, along with other specialists such as anaesthetists, protested in support of similar demands that their salary reflect their specialist training.

## Metal workers in Jura, France workers protest plant closure

Workers at the MBF Aluminium metal works in Jura, France protested against the planned closure of the plant and loss of 280 jobs since the start of April, reports *France Bleu*.

The metal workers demanded that the Dijon Commercial Court find a new buyer for the facility after the Renault subcontractor went into receivership. They have threatened to blow up the factory to prevent resale of the equipment if the company is liquidated.

Following months of protest, and a hunger strike last week by four workers at the plant, the court extended the deadline to find a buyer, having rejected the only offer made so far. The government proposed a public-private partnership, putting up 30 percent of the money for a company to take over production.

## Unions end strike at French hygiene products company

On Monday, the CGT and other unions ended a strike at MP Hygiène. The French company manufactures hygiene products, including disinfectant hand gel.

The workers walked out on May 21, to demand a three percent wage increase. The unions ended the strike after agreeing with management a pay increase between 1.5 and 2.5 percent for workers earning under 13 euros per hour, and a pay freeze for those earning more than this.

The CGT delegate at the plant justified the deal by accepting the company's claims it could not afford any more. He was quoted in *France Bleu* saying "[t]he markets are still light and we must not pull ourselves down."

## Strike of hotel cleaners in French capital ends with pay rise and reduced workload

French workers at the company subcontracted to clean the Ibis des Batignolles hotel in Paris ended an eight-month strike on Tuesday, after the company agreed to most of their demands.

The hotel cleaners began protests 22 months ago. *20 Minutes* reports that although their demand to be hired directly by the hotel was refused, the subcontractor agreed to salary increases of between 250 and 500 euros per month, a 7.30 euro daily lunch allowance, and a reduction in workload.

## Italian dockers refuse to load arms for Israel to use against Gaza

Dock workers at the Italian port of Ravenna planned a strike to block the transport of military materials to be used in Israel's attack on Gaza, reports *ANSA*. The three unions at the port learned this week of a plan to load material on June 3 and transport it to Ashdod in Israel, and called for a strike on that day.

Following the announcement, the ship scheduled to pick up the cargo announced it would not be collecting the load, so the unions called off the stoppage.

## Strike at Elica extractor hood manufacturer plant in Fabriano, Italy against redundancies

On Monday, workers in the town of Fabriano, Italy walked out for a four-hour strike against plans by the multinational extractor hood manufacturer Elica to cut 409 jobs. Around 300 workers took part in a rally in the town, according to *ANSA*.

Elica, which employs around 4,800 internationally, also announced plans to close its plant in Cerreto D'Esi and move production away from three of its Italian sites. The unions at Elica announced a limited campaign in opposition, comprising only 16 hours of strike action in total over the next few weeks.

temporary cuts in working hours for those who keep their jobs.

### **Retail and distribution workers strike across Germany for collective agreement**

Workers in the retail and distribution sectors across Germany took part in demonstrations and warning strikes last week, to demand an improved collective agreement for nearly 400,000 workers.

The stoppages were called by the United Services Union (Verdi) in support of its demand for a 4.5 percent plus 45 euro pay rise, as well as an increased minimum wage, reports the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*.

### **Port workers in Hamburg, Germany refuse overtime in support of pay rise demand**

Dock workers at the Port of Hamburg were called on by Verdi to refuse to work on bank holiday May 24, in support of its collective bargaining with the Central Association of Germany Seaport Companies (ZDS). According to the *Hamburger Morgenpost*, dockers usually volunteer for shifts on the bank holiday because of the extra pay rate.

Verdi has demanded a 5.9 percent pay rise and an increase in holiday pay, but the ZDS has only offered a 2.1 percent raise. The collective agreement covers around 15,000 workers.

### **Stoppages continue in Dutch metal and electronics industry for pay rise**

Workers in metal and electronics plants across the Netherlands continue a campaign of walkouts to demand an improved collective labour agreement for the 160,000 workers in the sector.

The *Algemeen Dagblad* reports the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (FNV) members stopped work on May 20 and 21, to demand wage increases above the employers' offer of 2.25 percent over two years. On Tuesday, metal workers in Friesland took part in a strike called by the FNV and the Christian National Trade Union.

Negotiations between the unions and employers' association FME broke down in September, after the FME offered a below inflation pay increase of 1.1 percent, and there have been occasional strikes since. The unions lowered their demand from a 5 percent pay increase to 2.5 percent this year.

### **H&M retail strike in Spain continues, following company offer**

The strike of retail workers in Spain against H&M's plan to close 30 stores and cut 1,100 jobs nationally continues into its fourth week. The Workers Commissions (CCOO) union has called a national strike each Saturday, and there have been multiple local walkouts throughout May.

According to *Europa Press*, following negotiations with the CCOO and General Workers Union, H&M withdrew its plans to cut working hours for all staff but has not withdrawn a single planned store closure or layoff. The unions proposed in negotiations to accept 330 job losses and

### **Spanish steel workers at Tubacex continue strike after rejecting "trap" from management**

Workers at the Spanish steel manufacturer Tubacex, who walked out indefinitely in February to oppose 129 redundancies, have rejected an offer from the company and are continuing their strike.

According to *Europa Press*, the five unions in the strike committee unanimously rejected Tubacex's proposal not to make any job cuts until 2024. They denounced this as a "trap," as it leaves workers open to victimisation and dismissal.

### **Spanish taxi drivers in Barcelona protest against Uber and Cabify**

On May 20, taxi drivers drove slowly through the streets of Barcelona, Spain in a protest against "gig economy" platforms Uber and Cabify. The two taxi unions, Élite Taxi and Taxi Project 2.0, organised the demonstration to demand that the local government create a public ride-hailing app for taxi services, reports *Catalan News*.

### **Indefinite strike of trainee assistant doctors in Belgium**

Trainee doctors working as assistants in Belgian hospitals began an indefinite strike from May 20. They are demanding employment contracts and improved working conditions.

The National Joint Doctors-Hospitals Commission proposed an agreement to bring an end to the strike on May 19, but it was rejected by the Inter-university Committee of Specialist Candidate Assistant Doctors (Cimacs), reports *RTL*. The president of Cimacs denounced the deal for leaving trainee doctors with a minimum 60-hour week and decreasing the pay for many trainees working in the south of Belgium.

### **Former Debenhams staff in Ireland vote to accept €3 million "training fund" pushed by union**

Former Debenhams employees in Ireland have ended their more than 400-day campaign of protests and pickets. Action began after the company reneged on a redundancy pay agreement when laying off 1,000 workers during its liquidation.

A vote on a three million euro "training fund," proposed by the Labour Court and negotiated by the Mandate trade union, passed with 75.6 percent in favour last week.

In January, Mandate members voted by 91 percent to reject a similar 3 million euro fund, but the union's repeated attempts to push the deal through made it clear to the ex-Debenhams workers that the union will not fight for more. A statement released by "Debenhams Shop Stewards and picket line activists" describes the union officials as "conditioned by what they saw as the normal course of events... that we would have to settle for our bare statutory minimum entitlements... and wage no fight for

something better.”

In contrast to what the statement calls the “passive minimalist approach” of Mandate officials, the workers courageously held their picket lines in the face of police violence, repeatedly preventing the liquidators KPMG from removing stock from the closed stores.

Last month, Dublin workers and supporters were attacked by 60 Gardaí and many arrested. Last week in Limerick the police attacked a picket line of around 100 people, but still failed to access the store. On Wednesday night, in Tralee, where according to a local councillor the ex-Debenhams staff voted overwhelmingly against Mandate’s deal, workers and local supporters made a final attempt to block the removal of stock by KPMG.

The unions and pseudo-left Solidarity party promoted parliamentary means to prevent similar attacks in future. Solidarity introduced a bill demanding companies prioritise payment to workers during liquidation. However, even this bill was rebuffed by the Irish government, which scheduled a debate on it for next year.

The deal worked out by Mandate and KPMG is already being used as a template for future attacks on workers. In the liquidation of the Arcadia retail group, Mandate has announced it is demanding a similar “training fund” instead of waging a fight for the workers’ enhanced redundancy agreement to be respected.

### **Greek metro workers in Athens hold warning strike in defiance of injunction**

Greek workers in the Athens Metro held a warning strike in the early morning on Wednesday, called by the Metro Employees Union (SELMA).

According to *ANA-MPA*, SELMA members went ahead with the stoppage in defiance of a court injunction declaring it illegal. They denounced the metro operator STASY for failing to provide spare parts for repairs and called on it to sign a new collective agreement.

### **Warning strike by Kosovo Tax Administration workers**

On May 20, workers at the Kosovo Tax Administration (TAK) called a one-hour national warning strike, and the union at the TAK threatened to call an indefinite strike if the government did not respond to their demands by Thursday.

The demands are that TAK be made independent of the executive, and for improvements to working conditions at the agency, reports *Ekonomia Online*.

### **Workers at Georgian bottling plant conclude strike over pay and staffing levels**

The 400 workers at the Borjomi mineral water bottling plant in Georgia ended their strike on Wednesday, after reaching an agreement over demands for a pay rise and increased staffing levels.

The walkout began on May 18, when workers said that Borjomi’s wage cuts and high inflation rates reduced their incomes by almost 50 percent. *First Channel* reports that the company, which initially refused the demands and attempted to bring in employees from other regions to break the strike, made some concessions and agreed to negotiate further with the

unions.

### **Petrol-?? union calls off strike to reduce working hours in Ravago petrochemicals plant, Turkey**

A strike scheduled to take place Tuesday was called off by the Petrol-?? union one day after it signed a deal with the Ravago petrochemicals company in Aliağa, Turkey.

The 400 members of Petrol-?? were demanding a reduction in the working week from 45 to 40 hours, but the deal did not include this provision, reports *Evrensel*. The supposed concession made by the company was to shorten the length of the collective bargaining agreement from three years to two, as well as a 1,400 lira pay rise for 2021 (the current annual inflation rate in Turkey is approximately 17 percent), and a pay rise of two percentage points above inflation in 2022.

### **UK education staff strike in schools and colleges**

Teachers employed by the Tendring Technology College at its two sites in England, Frinton and Thorpe-le-Soken began a three-day strike Tuesday. Around 1,800 students attend the Essex college.

The National Education Union members oppose plans by the London-based Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) that runs the college to carry out restructuring. This would lead to a four percent cut in the number of teaching and support staff jobs, meaning teachers working longer hours. The teachers were joined on the picket line by parents and students calling for AET to relinquish control of the college. A petition started by a year 11 student was signed by over 1,400 in less than 24 hours.

Teachers at the Coventry School Foundation (CSF) held a one-day strike Wednesday, to protest plans by the CSF to merge the private schools it runs. CSF wants to merge Bablake School, Bablake Junior School, King Henry VIII and the King Henry VIII Prep school which are all in Coventry.

The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) members fear the merger would lead to job losses and detrimental working conditions. A further nine days of strikes are planned. A NASUWT executive member stated on the union’s website, “We remain ready to work with the employer to find an alternative plan for the future of education provision within the Coventry School Foundation.”

Teachers at Peacehaven Heights Primary School in Brighton held a one-day strike on Tuesday. The NEU members are opposed to the school being handed over to the STEP Academy Trust. Teachers were joined on the picket line by parents. They took part in a protest outside Lewes County Hall where a council meeting was taking place. The teachers held a previous one-day strike over the issue.

At Shrewsbury College, teachers were to hold a further strike Wednesday in defence of victimised NEU rep John Boken, targeted after raising complaints about racism in the college. The NEU members have staged a series of walkouts in his defence since February this year.

Around 100 teachers at City and Islington sixth form college in London held a three-day strike beginning Tuesday this week. It follows three stoppages over the last two weeks. The NEU members are protesting increased workload due to proposals that teachers work additional evenings and afternoons interviewing prospective students.

Following strike action by NEU members at the John Roan School, Maze Hill, Blackheath, in Greenwich, southeast London, victimised NEU

rep Kirstie Paton, who had faced dismissal, was reinstated. Paton, a teacher of 20 years at the school, used a trade union branded social media account to highlight fears that some lateral flow tests may not be reliable. Her employer, academy chain United Learning, accused her of gross misconduct, but that has been overturned. Paton's case won the support of parents, students and colleagues.

### **Strike by academic staff at Liverpool University, England begins**

Around 1,300 staff at Liverpool University, England began a three-week strike on Monday. The strike follows a programme of only working contracted hours and boycotting voluntary activities begun May 10.

The University and College Union (UCU) members voted by an 84 percent majority to walk out over the university's threat to cut teaching and research posts in the Health and Life Sciences Faculty. The university initially proposed to axe 47 jobs, although this has been reduced to 32. Among those slated to be made redundant are academics who have carried out leading research on COVID-19.

According to the UCU, the university came up with so-called "rank and yank" criteria to select academics deemed to be the worst performing. UCU members at the university analysed the criteria, which they concluded are "statistically innumerate."

The UCU organised an online rally on Monday to launch the strike, and a socially distanced physical rally is planned at University Square on Friday.

### **Coffee produce workers at Oxfordshire, England plant facing "fire and rehire" hold three-day strike**

Around 300 UK workers at the Jacobs Douwe Egberts coffee products plant in Banbury, Oxfordshire facing "fire and rehire", who had voted by an 87 percent majority for industrial action, began a three-day strike Wednesday. It follows two previous 24-hour strikes, protests and an overtime ban.

The company intends to issue "section 188" notices to its employees, enabling an employer who has failed to negotiate changes to fire and reinstate employees on worse terms and conditions. The company wants to replace the current final salary pension scheme with an inferior defined contribution scheme.

### **Cereal workers in Northamptonshire, England ballot over inferior contracts under threat of fire and rehire**

UK engineers employed by breakfast cereal manufacturer Weetabix are balloting over new contracts under the threat of fire and rehire. The contracts would mean changes in their work pattern with cuts in shift payments and less night shift work—resulting in a loss of pay up to £5,000 a year.

The Unite union members will ballot from May 27 until June 3. Any strike would start in June.

### **Further strikes by traffic enforcement officers in west London borough of Ealing against restructuring**

Following two three-day stoppages in May, more than 40 UK traffic enforcement officers, who oversee parking regulations in the west London borough of Ealing, announced two further three-day stoppages for June 1 and June 9.

The Unite union members work for contractor Serco, which has been trying to impose a restructuring and redundancy programme since 2019. They accuse the company of unfairly dismissing workers, and call for the programme to be renegotiated. The workers are angry that an Ealing council officer wrote to Serco asking the company to remove a union rep who had held that post for 20 years. According to Unite, the council officer accused the rep of bringing the council into disrepute.

### **IT staff at London tenant referencing service sacked while on strike against fire and rehire to impose pay cuts**

Around 20 IT workers at Goodlord in the UK capital, who began a continuous indefinite stoppage February 22, were fired on May 19.

The Unite union members, employed by the company on rolling fixed-term contracts, walked out after the company cut pay by 20 percent, a form of fire and rehire. The new contract would see salary cuts of up to £6,000, leaving staff on annual pay of around £18,000, less than the current London Living wage of £21,157. Goodlord lost its Living Wage Foundation accreditation, as the pay cut means it no longer qualifies.

The contracts for around half the workers expired during the strike and they were dismissed. A rebalot of the striking staff on April 26 gave an overwhelming mandate to continue the strike. The grounds of the rebalot included protests against the dismissals and the use of agency staff to replace the strikers.

The workers are pursuing a case of unfair dismissal for nine of the dismissed staff, who were still under contract and covered by a lawful ballot for industrial action. A protest in support of the strikers was held outside Goodlord's offices on Tuesday.

### **Logistics workers at Long Eaton, England vote to strike over redundancy terms**

UK staff at DHL logistics Long Eaton in Derbyshire voted by over 90 percent for industrial action for improved redundancy pay. They will hold a 24-hour strike on June 9. The warehouse supplies retailer, Marks & Spencer.

The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers members are demanding higher payments for long serving staff, who will be redundant at the end of July when the site is closes.

### **Protest in Widnes, England over treatment of Amazon workers**

A protest was held in Widnes on Wednesday highlighting the poor treatment of Amazon workers in the UK and internationally. They were also calling for union recognition. Amazon has a warehouse in Widnes.

The protest was held to coincide with the Amazon annual shareholders' meeting the same day. Protestors held up a giant banner on Victoria Promenade reading "Stop the Greed." In Britain, the Unite union is seeking to represent Amazon workers and has set up a whistleblowing hotline.

Recently Amazon workers in Bessemer in Alabama in the USA rejected a top-down attempt by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union to represent them. The rejection showed the extent of workers' alienation from the pro-corporate trade unions.

### **Refuse collectors in Sandwell, England ballot for strike over work conditions**

Around 90 workers employed by outsourcing company Serco providing refuse collection services for Sandwell Council, England are currently being balloted for possible strike action. The GMB union members accuse the company of bullying, making threats and tolerating dangerous working practices.

### **Unite union calls off strike action against Remote Sign On at two London bus companies**

A planned 48-hour strike of around 4,000 London bus drivers working for two Metrolink bus companies, Metrolink Travel and Metrolink West, was called off by the Unite union. A three-day stoppage due to begin June 7 was also called off. The walkout would have affected 100 routes involving 16 bus depots.

The drivers are opposed to plans by Metrolink to introduce Remote Sign On (RSO). Rather than signing on at a bus depot, drivers would meet their bus en route. This would have lengthened the working day and presented health and safety concerns. Drivers would have no access to toilet and canteen facilities and could have faced parking difficulties for their own vehicles. Unite also calculated it would have meant a pay reduction of around seven percent as drivers are only paid driving time.

The Metrolink drivers voted last October by over 95 percent to strike against RSO.

Metrolink announced it was delaying introducing RSO until 31 December 2022. A May 19 letter to London and Eastern region Unite members stated, "Following this period, should Metrolink Travel still wish to explore Remote Sign On for any of its routes, this will only happen in full consultation with Unite."

At French-owned RATP subsidiary London United, Unite recently pushed through a below inflation 2.25 percent pay deal over two years and a £400 one off payment for 2020. The vote to accept was 696, with 639 voting to reject.

At Go North West in Manchester, Unite recently ended an eleven-week dispute of more than 400 workers against the company's fire and rehire policy. The union negotiated a sellout deal including a longer working day leading to job cuts, unpaid meal breaks, concessions on sick pay and compulsory overtime if a bus runs late.

### **Pay parity strike of council workers in Norwich, England called off by unions**

A week-long strike by around 170 UK environmental workers, who provide street cleaning and ground maintenance services in Norwich, was suspended on Tuesday by the Unison and Unite unions. The workers are employed by Norwich City Council arm's length company Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL).

They were transferred to NCSL from outsource company Norse and promised pay and conditions would be brought in line with directly employed council staff. Instead, they were offered a 20p an hour pay rise. The members of both unions voted by large majorities for a stoppage. The council came back with an improved offer on Tuesday and the workers will be balloted.

### **Strike by glass workers at company in England called off by Unite union**

A four-day strike due to begin Wednesday by 170 UK workers at the ENCIRC glass bottle and distribution centre in Elton, Cheshire, was called off by the Unite union. The workers held three days of stoppages in May.

The workers were protesting new work practices which would have adversely affected pay and flexibility in taking leave, and meant reduced staff levels leading to health and safety concerns. The new conditions would have left them at a disadvantage compared to employees at other ENCIRC sites.

ENCIRC put forward new proposals described by Unite as an "excellent deal."

### **Unite union ends strike by staff at Thurrock council in England**

The Unite union ended the strike by around 90 workers providing refuse, highway maintenance and street cleaning at Thurrock council, Essex. The workers returned to work on Monday.

The strike, begun on April 13, was in opposition to proposals to cut salaries by £2,000 to £3,500 a year. The council wanted to cut payments for unsocial hours worked, overtime, bank holidays and night shifts.

According to Unite, the council made changes to its proposals, which will mean no pay cuts.

### **Pay parity strike at Hovis bakery in Northern Ireland ended by union**

After 11 days, the Unite and Bakers Union have ended the strike by around 200 bakery workers at the Hovis bread bakery at Apollo Road, Belfast in Northern Ireland.

The bakery workers walked out to seek pay parity with Hovis bakery workers in Britain. This would mean a 10 percent pay increase, but Hovis only offered three percent.

Workers voted by 79 percent to accept a revised pay offer of eight percent over two years.

### **UK retailer Argos office staff face "fire and rehire" and inferior contract**

Around 700 office staff at retail chain Argos face the threat of “fire and rehire,” leaving them with a worse contract. Argos is part of the Sainsbury’s giant retail chain.

The staff work in Argos’s headquarters and distribution centres. The cuts included in the proposed contracts include lower employer pension contributions, four less annual leave days, a cut in the company car allowance of about £3,000 and a cut in pay that could amount to up to around £4,000 a year.

The *Daily Mirror* reported having seen a document that stated, “Colleagues who choose not to accept the [terms and conditions] will be served with notice of termination of employment at their final consultation and leave the business after working their notice.”

### **Protests by Iranian education staff in Tehran against poverty pay**

On Sunday, caretakers and service staff working in Iranian schools protested outside education ministry offices in Tehran and two other sites.

Low pay has left workers with only around a quarter of the income needed to provide basic necessities for a family. The same day, contract teachers working in non-profit schools protested outside the Iranian parliament. They only receive a third of the wages paid to permanently employed teachers.

Iran’s economy has been ravaged by US sanctions, slashing exports of crude oil by 80 percent, leading to price increases in basic necessities and medicines and devaluing pay.

### **Protests over jobs in Oman**

On Sunday, protests broke out in north and south Oman by workers and youths protesting lack of job opportunities. Protests spread to cities on Monday and Tuesday, taking place in al-Khaburah, Ibri, Nizwa, Rustaq, Sohar and Suwayq among others.

Unemployment has soared in Oman as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Riot police responded to the protests and arrests were made. The ruler of Oman, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, called on the government to create public sector jobs and offer subsidies to the private sector.

### **Eight Lesotho garment workers demonstrating in Maseru for wage rise injured by police gunfire**

Garment workers in Lesotho capital Maseru walked out on May 21 to demand two promised minimum wage increases. Riot police shot at the demonstrators, injuring many. At least eight workers needed hospital treatment.

“Eight workers today were hospitalised after being shot at with rubber bullets and—in one instance—live rounds,” according to National Clothing Textile and Allied Workers Union General Secretary Sam Mokhele.

Other reports described the deployment of special forces, with police shooting 12 protesters, including two children aged seven and nine, in Maputsoe and Maseru, while others were beaten or arrested.

Unions in Lesotho, including that of garment workers, are pleading with the government to make up for two missed increases in the minimum wage for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022—due to be granted by the government

each April but now on hold indefinitely. United Textile Employees General Secretary Solong Senohe said this “exposed the workers to absolute poverty because their current salaries cannot address their needs.”

Police attacks on striking workers occur frequently in the small nation state, which is surrounded by and dependent upon South Africa.

### **South African Metrobus bus drivers in Johannesburg continue strike over pay and allowances**

Bus drivers are carrying their stoppage into a fourth week at the city-owned Metrobus in Johannesburg, South Africa, after the company’s legal application to forbid the strike was refused at the Labour Court.

Over 100 Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Union of South Africa members are demanding an 18 percent pay rise, long service bonus, COVID-19 allowance, transport allowance and the reinstatement of dismissed employees. They appealed to fellow workers to join them in the dispute, but the majority South African Municipal Workers’ Union, with 700 members, has distanced itself from the strike.

### **Striking workers at South African university enter third week of pay dispute**

Over 300 workers at Sefako Makgatho Health Services University in Pretoria, South Africa have been on strike since May 10, as negotiations with management remain in deadlock.

The National Health Education and Allied Workers Union members want a five percent pay increase, dropped from an initial 15 percent, rather than the four percent management offered. A union spokesperson said, “We want all our demands met because workers are struggling to make ends meet. Everything from petrol, electricity and food costs are too high.”

### **Taxi drivers in Gqeberha, South Africa disrupt city in protest over COVID-19 relief fund payments**

Taxi drivers blocked roads and burned vehicles in Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth), South Africa Tuesday, bringing the city to a standstill and forcing a meeting with the regional taxi council.

Employees at the Uncedo Taxi Association and the Port Elizabeth Taxi Association were protesting for the second time in three months over non-payment of funds from the Unemployment Insurance Fund’s COVID-19 Temporary Employee Relief Scheme (TERS). Drivers say the firms have claimed the TERS money on their behalf but not passed it on. One driver received nothing since applying for his TERS payment in June 2020: “I have four children and I am unable to take care of them. The funds were going to help me provide for them.”

South Africa has 1,645,555 reported coronavirus cases with 56,077 fatalities.

### **Kenyan health workers in Wajir County walk out to demand**

## **promotions and allowances**

Health workers in Wajir County, Kenya walked out on May 11, to demand promotions, payment of allowances and proper use of deductions from their salaries.

In March, the workers went on strike, but the union and management conspired to get them back to work after six days, claiming they would be promoted by April. Employers are claiming a technical hitch is responsible for the delay.

The Wajir County Chief Officer for Public Health, Adan Enow, said employers were in the process of ending the strike. Siyad Abdi Ali, the Wajir Kenya National Union of Nurses (KNUN) county secretary said, "We are still talking."

## **Union tries to force Namibian broadcast workers on strike for pay rise back to work**

The strike begun April 22 by employees of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is in danger of betrayal by their union. The Namibia Public Workers Union (NAPWU) members are demanding an eight percent salary increase, better transport, accommodation and medical aid allowances.

NAPWU told the strikers to return to work as the NBC enforces a "no work, no pay" rule. The strikers are without their salaries and other employee benefits, such as medical aid. NAPWU informed the strikers on May 21 that their salaries would be halved.

A meeting between strikers and the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)-affiliated NAPWU ended abruptly when workers accused union general secretary Petrus Nevonga of not acting in their interests. They complained Nevonga was only concerned about the next SWAPO congress and did not want to endanger his chances of gaining a seat in parliament.

## **Namibian Spar workers' anger over union pay sellout**

Shopworkers at the Spar supermarket in Lüderitz, Namibia are angry that the Namibia Food and Allied Workers Union (Nafau) shut down their strike for an increase of N\$2.73. After six years with no pay increase, the workers were demanding N\$20 (from N\$6) per hour for service department staff, and N\$15 (from N\$7.50) per hour for cleaners and shelf packers. They also demanded an annual bonus and housing, pension and transport allowances.

Nafau's shop steward at the Lüderitz Spar, Albertina Kalimbwe, complained of being pressured to sign by Willem Absalom, the union's deputy general secretary: "The deputy general secretary just kept saying the company would not give more than that and demanded that we sign. But we are not happy." She also complained the company broke rules on protected strikes by employing additional workers.



To contact the WWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**