

# 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.

## Danish nurses continue one-hour wildcat strikes over pay and understaffing

Nurses in Denmark continue to hold one-hour wildcat strikes, defying the orders of the Danish Nurses' Council (DSR) union and fines by the national Labour Court. The strikes followed the shutdown of the national nurses' strike in August, when the government imposed a pay deal rejected twice by DSR members.

The wildcat strikes were organised through Facebook groups, and hundreds of nurses have taken part across Denmark. Ekstra Bladet reported that nurses at Køge Hospital near Copenhagen will be joining the stoppages from next week. The nurses received support from workers in other sectors, with dock workers and scaffolders visiting their picket line in Esbjerg, international donations to help pay fines, and social workers in Silkeborg walking out on a sympathy strike in September.

Throughout the 10-week national strike of nearly 6,000 nurses, shut down at the end of August by the government, the DSR refused to call for broader support in the working class, appealing instead to female politicians of all parties on the basis that nurses were underpaid because of gender discrimination. The pseudo-left Socialist Peoples' Party (SF) and Unity List proposed measures to provide more money for "women's professions", despite the SF voting to fast-track the government intervention against the nurses. The ruling Social Democratic government obliged, announcing a "pay commission" to demobilise nurses' anger.

## French public transport workers continue strikes over pay, conditions and privatisation

Public transport workers in cities across France continue a strike wave to demand improved pay and conditions and oppose moves to privatise local services.

On October 15, bus drivers in the city of Brest held their fourth walkout in October, and according to Ouest France were joined by tram drivers. The French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) reported that drivers were angry over unreasonable schedules and lack of rest to recover from the physical demands of the job. In September, bus drivers at RATP-Dev, which operates the city's transit network, protested about the back injuries they were suffering from driving all day over speed bumps along their routes.

Rail workers in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur joined a one-day strike on

October 14 to oppose the decision of the regional government to bring in the private operator Transdev to take over the Marseille–Nice line from the state rail company SNCF. General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and CFDT union members took part in the walkout, reported *Le Figaro*. The CGT announced another day of strike action on October 29, when the regional government makes its final decision on the operator.

An indefinite strike of coach drivers for CFTA, a subsidiary of Transdev, in the Dordogne region began on Wednesday. The CGT called the strike in support of demands for higher pay, and according to France Bleu drivers denounced their working conditions, reporting days of up to 14 hours. CFTA runs many of the school bus services in the region.

France Bleu also reported that the CFDT called a one-day strike for Friday of bus drivers in the town of La Roche-sur-Yon. Bus and tram drivers in Dijon also begin the first of three 24-hour stoppages on Friday, called by the National Union of Autonomous Trade Unions (UNSA). In Le Mans bus and tram drivers begin the first of a planned six days of strike action, after two drivers were fired for alleged fights. A joint press release from the FO, CFDT and UNSA condemned the sackings as "abusive" and called for fair disciplinary measures.

## Paramedics and other healthcare workers continue strikes in France over unsafe conditions

French healthcare workers took part in protests and strikes nationwide to denounce poor conditions endangering patients.

Paramedics and ambulance drivers began an indefinite strike on October 12, after the government failed to implement a 2020 agreement promising to increase their pay and organise their working conditions. The drivers and paramedics' unions announced they were refusing to carry out emergency transport, but if the government ordered any workers to return to work, "we will obviously do our job." *Le Figaro* reported on Tuesday, one week after the beginning of the strike, the two unions called off the strike after receiving promises about the "will of the state to meet [their] demands."

On October 13 workers at Apperton, a company which sterilises medical equipment, began an indefinite strike in Bouc-Bel-Air to denounce their working conditions which they say endanger patients making it impossible to do their jobs. France Bleu interviewed one striker, who said that there was a risk the equipment was contaminated before it was used on patients.

Healthcare workers in the A&E department of Laval hospital continue their indefinite strike begun on October 8 over low staffing levels, according to France Bleu. The head of the department, also part of the strike, issued an open letter to the Minister of Health and said that the lack of doctors was endangering patients.

## **French school workers supporting children with disabilities hold new strike over “dehumanised” conditions**

AESH (accompaniment of students with disabilities) workers in France, who support students with disabilities to attend school, held a fourth one-day strike on Tuesday.

The stoppage was part of a campaign to denounce poor pay and conditions, and low staffing levels. According to 20 Minutes, there were protests of AESH workers in more than 80 cities, called by several unions. One worker interviewed said the schedules imposed “dehumanised” their job, leading to instability for the children as they have multiple AESH workers assigned. Another worker interviewed by Le Figaro said the number of hours of support each child received had “dropped drastically this year, by five or six hours per week”.

## **Spanish unions betray struggle against mass job cuts at Banco Sabadell**

This week the unions at Spain’s Banco Sabadell agreed to at least 1,380 job losses. Banco Sabadell is the third Spanish bank to carry out mass layoffs this year with the assistance of the trade unions. CaixaBank carried out 6,452 cuts and the unions accepted 2,725 job losses at BBVA, in each case with only a few token strikes to demand different redundancy terms and “voluntary” redundancies.

Banco Sabadell initially announced it was seeking 1,936 job losses and will manage to eliminate the vast majority of these. Europa Press reports that as many as 1,605 posts could be eliminated if enough workers accept early retirement or voluntary severance.

Last week the unions called off a one-day strike, citing the need to “give negotiation a chance.” While 80 percent of the bank’s workers walked out on October 8 for 24 hours, the unions kept their members’ struggle extremely limited, calling only one other full strike day, and token one-hour and 15-minute stoppages the week before.

## **Phone line operators for 061 medical emergency number in Catalonia, Spain begin indefinite strike**

Over 700 Spanish workers operating the 061 phone lines for the medical emergency service in Catalonia began an indefinite strike on Tuesday. They are demanding improved working conditions and pay and denounce the results of privatising the service.

All major unions represented at the service called their members out, joining workers who operate the 112 emergency number, who began their own indefinite strike in August.

The 112 workers’ strike was effectively banned by the government, which announced the strike could only go ahead on the condition the service continued to operate at 100 percent efficiency. The Ministry of Health similarly restricted the right of the 061 workers to strike, demanding the service run at 85 percent of normal capacity, according to Crónica Global.

The 061 service is operated by the transport company Ferrovial, which took over the service in May. Workers called for an increase in pay including a bonus for overwork due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a reduction in hours, and a limit to the number of consecutive days they can be made to work. el Periódico reports that the unions involved also called

on the Catalan government to move quickly towards taking the service back into public ownership.

## **Spanish unions “suspend” Balearic Islands cleaning strikes again**

In the past two weeks, the Workers’ Commissions (CCOO) and General Workers Union (UGT) called off planned strikes of cleaning and waste disposal workers on the Balearic Islands, Spain.

Cleaning workers took part in multiple strikes over the past months against low pay and insecure contracts.

On October 14, the UGT signed an “agreement in principle” committing to future negotiations and better contracts between the union and employers, Europa Press reported.

The CCOO put a “pre-agreement” to its members on October 15, which would have only changed conditions for new hires, leaving all existing workers on the same contracts. This was rejected by a narrow margin and the strike was continued, but on Monday CCOO members voted in favour of a new contract which would apply to all workers. However, this new agreement only committed the city councils to negotiate new contracts with the private companies who operate the cleaning services. The CCOO cynically said it was “postponing but not calling off” the strike, making clear that nothing has yet changed for workers on the islands.

## **Greek teaching union shuts down assessment boycott**

The presidents of the ELME teachers’ union association decided last week to shut down a boycott of school evaluations. Evaluations will be used for attacks on teachers’ conditions and public education, Efsyn.gr reported.

While 54 percent of the union officials present voted in favour of continuing the boycott, the union’s anti-democratic requirement of a 67 percent vote in favour of a strike was not met, with many officials defying members’ votes for a boycott.

Last week, around 10,000 teachers, students and parents protested the government’s attacks on education and lack of protection from COVID-19 in schools. The boycott of evaluations found mass support among teachers, and around 70 percent of teachers in Greece joined a one-day strike on October 11 despite legal threats from the government.

## **Uber drivers in Zagreb strike over unpaid wages**

On Sunday, 2,000 Uber drivers in the Croatian capital Zagreb stopped work after the company failed to pay their wages on time, reported Ve?ernji list.

A spokesman for the Union of Digital Platform Workers told the paper the strike would continue for three hours on Monday, whether or not the company paid the wages, as late payments were too common. One driver said in an interview he was owed 2500 HRK, and said “We bring them profit. So why aren’t we the first to be informed that the money will be late?”

The company blamed the delay in payment on a local bank, and paid its drivers after the strike, according to Poslovni.

## **Six-day strike begins at private psychiatric clinics in Brandenburg, Germany**

On Thursday, around 1,300 workers at the Asklepios private mental health clinics in the German state of Brandenburg began a six-day strike during collective bargaining negotiations, reported the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

The United Services Union called the strike to demand, among other things, the end to differences in pay between employees in the east and west of Germany, reporting that some employees in Brandenburg earn 10,600 euros less per year than their colleagues in Hamburg.

Workers at the Asklepios clinics held numerous warning strikes in support of demands to include all workers in the same collective agreement as public sector healthcare workers, as well as closing the East–West pay gap.

## **Sunday stoppages by ScotRail workers, Scotland over overtime rates into eighth month**

A further strike took place Sunday by several hundred Scottish train conductors and ticket examiners at ScotRail.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members are involved in one of the UK's longest-running stoppages. The conductors' stoppages began in March and were joined by ticket examiners at the end of April, who will strike until October 31. They are demanding equal overtime pay with drivers.

The RMT betrayed the five-year struggle of rail workers against the introduction of Driver Operated Trains. The union reached agreements with different train operators, undermining the safety-critical role of thousands of conductors.

## **Rail strikes in Scotland planned during COP26 climate change summit**

Around 2,000 rail workers in Scotland are set to strike during the COP26 climate change talks in Glasgow.

The RMT members at ScotRail voted by an 84 percent majority to strike from November 1-12 over pay and working conditions. The strike will coincide with the climate talks taking place from October 31 to November 12.

Separately rail workers on the Caledonian Sleeper service which runs from London to Scotland will strike on November 1 and 2. The RMT members have been involved in a long-running pay dispute with Serco, the outsourcing company that runs the service.

## **Further strike by cereal engineers at Weetabix, UK factories over pay and conditions**

Around 80 engineers at the Weetabix plants in Kettering and Corby, England held their fifth consecutive 48-hour walkout Tuesday, against the threat of fire and rehire.

The Unite union members began their series of 48-hour stoppages on

September 21. Further 48-hour strikes are due each Tuesday up until November 30. Weetabix management are using agency staff to try and resolve production problems arising during strike days.

The engineers oppose pay cuts and restructuring of their contracts that would roster them to work more days, with the loss of shift allowance. The changes mean the engineers losing up to £5,000 a year. The threat of dismissal hangs over those workers refusing to accept the changes.

The engineers were to strike at the end of June, followed by weekly 24-hour strikes throughout the summer. Unite suspended the strike to allow “meaningful talks.” This resulted in new proposals from Weetabix. Unite was unable to sell the new proposals to the workers, who rejected them by an 82 percent majority, forcing Unite to launch the current round of stoppages.

## **Stoppage of UK shoe distributor workers against fire and rehire threat enters third week**

Around 100 UK workers at the Clarks shoe manufacturer's Westway distribution centre in Street, Somerset are continuing their strike over a fire and rehire threat.

The Community union members voted by an 88 percent majority for the strike, begun on October 4. The firm was taken over in February by Lion Rock, a Hong Kong-based private equity firm. Lion Rock is seeking to cut overtime rates, reduce pay, cut sick pay, reduce parental leave and cut redundancy and call-out pay.

Workers anticipate a pay cut of over £1.50 an hour, and the abolition of 30-minute paid lunch breaks and 10-minute paid coffee breaks.

The *Observer* on October 17 quoted one of the strikers who feared losing his present accommodation if the cuts are imposed. He told the newspaper, “I need a two-bedroom place for my kids to come to visit. They won't be able to stay over if I haven't got the space. There is a real possibility I might be losing my job, my house, and my kids.”

Staff at Clarks Head Quarters, also in Street, are similarly affected by the fire and rehire threats, but are reported to have accepted the changes.

## **Strike by chemical workers in Manchester, UK over pay**

Around 25 UK production and warehouse staff at chemical company Evonik at Clayton, Manchester were on strike Monday over pay.

The Unite union members rejected a below inflation 1.5 percent pay offer. Further strikes are planned for October 23 and 24 and from November 12-14. The company manufactures foams and resins used in engineering, construction and auto production. The Clayton site is an historic one dating back 130 years of chemical production. The company made a £5.5 million profit last year.

## **Further strikes by school teachers in Salford, England over dictatorial management practices**

Following five previous days of walkouts, UK teachers at the Co-op Academy Swinton in Salford began a three-day strike on Wednesday.

The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) members are opposing excessive working hours, shorter

lunch breaks, the elimination of pastoral care time and management's imposition of practices relating to performance management.

According to the *Manchester Evening News*, the academy reached an agreement with the NASUWT but some of the teachers continued the stoppages.

### **Rally by teachers at Oaks Park school, Redbridge, London fighting against bullying and victimisation**

Around 50 teachers from Oaks Park school in Redbridge, London, along with supporters held a protest rally outside Redbridge town hall on Saturday.

The National Education Union (NEU) members accuse school management of bullying and demand the reinstatement of a sacked NEU union representative. They held 20 days of strikes so far in support of four teachers victimised for raising safety concerns over COVID-19. The four used Section 44 health and safety legislation to ask to work from home. They were not given jobs after being interviewed for permanent posts.

The protesters accused the Labour-controlled council of supporting the bullying tactics of the school management.

On June 22, London bus driver David O'Sullivan joined striking teachers outside the school. O'Sullivan was sacked with the connivance of the Unite union by his employer Metroline for raising safety concerns over the pandemic.

Further strikes are planned for next week and in November.

### **Refuse workers in Derbyshire Dales, UK strike over pay**

UK refuse workers employed by outsourcing company, Serco, contracted to provide refuse collection for the Derbyshire Dale Council walked out Monday.

This follows a strike on October 15 by the GMB union members who are protesting low pay and management attitude. They are also carrying out a work to rule.

### **Strike by postal workers in South Wales over sacked colleague**

Postal workers in Llanelli in south Wales held a 24-hour strike on October 13.

The Communications Workers Union members voted for the stoppage over the sacking of a colleague by a 98 percent majority. A further strike was planned for Thursday.

### **UK nuclear sub base emergency workers strike over job cuts**

Specialist fire emergency staff at the UK nuclear submarine weapons naval base on the river Clyde in Scotland walked out on Tuesday and Thursday to oppose job cuts.

The Unite union members work for outsourcing company Capita providing emergency fire cover at the base. Capita went ahead with plans

to cut eight firefighter posts, around 15 percent of the total. Strikes are also planned for October 26 and 28.

### **Refuse collection workers in Glasgow, Scotland to strike over pay during COP26 summit**

Refuse collection workers in Glasgow are set to begin a strike November 1 coinciding with the start of the COP26 summit meeting.

The GMB members will walk out in support of their fight for a substantial pay rise. The fight by refuse workers is part of a Scotland wide fight by local government workers for a £2,000 rise for those workers on less than £25,000 a year. Glasgow council has been in talks with GMB brokered by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. However, Glasgow council has only offered a £850 rise to the refuse workers who are set to strike.

### **Bus drivers pay strike at Stagecoach Greater Manchester in Britain ends as union accepts below inflation offer**

A strike of around 1,000 bus drivers working for Stagecoach subsidiary, the Greater Manchester Bus Company South, over pay has ended after the Unite union pushed through a below-inflation deal.

The Unite union members voted by an overwhelming majority to walk out over an unsatisfactory pay offer. Eight days of stoppages were planned, the first due to take place October 26 and the last on November 12.

Workers balloted at four depots across Greater Manchester. The pay deal of 3.7 percent increase and a one-off payment of £150 was hailed by Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham as a "tremendous victory" and a "fair pay increase." Since becoming general secretary, Graham has prevented 20 disputes at Stagecoach becoming national strike action.

The Unite website states: "During the coronavirus crisis Unite is working to keep workers and the public safe, to defend jobs and to protect incomes."

Unite suspended strikes, ramming through sell-out agreements such as at Go North West, and kept drivers on the job in unsafe conditions leading to many COVID fatalities.

### **Ballot of UK university staff begins over pensions and pay**

A ballot of academic and related staff at UK universities over pay and pensions began on Monday until November 4.

The University and College Union (UCU) members are balloting over cuts to universities' superannuation pension scheme, erosion of pay, excessive workloads and increasing use of temporary contracts.

A total of 152 institutions are involved in the ballot. Six will ballot just about the pensions attack, 78 over pay and working condition while at 68 institutions two ballots will be held concurrently, one over pensions and another over pay and working conditions.

Staff are facing an attack that will see them lose around 35 percent of the value of their pensions.

The University and Colleges Employers Association made a pay increase offer of 1.5 percent. This represents a cut in real terms and comes

on top of an estimated cut in pay of around 20 percent between 2009 and 2019.

The UCU played a treacherous role in the ongoing fight in defence of pensions. Following the sell-out of nationwide industrial action in 2018 over attacks on pensions, the union was accused at a protest of UCU members outside its HQ of being “objectively on the side of the employers.” The UCU demobilised mass resistance on the part of workers and students to establishing a corporatist Joint Expert Panel on pensions with the employers.

#### **Nurses in England belonging to RCN union to take part in consultative ballot over pay**

From November 4 nurses belonging to the Royal College of Nurses (RCN) will take part in a consultative ballot, the first in its history.

They will be asked if they are prepared to take part in industrial action in opposition to the three percent pay offer. In a previous ballot of RCN members 92 percent rejected the derisory below inflation pay offer. Should they vote in favour of being prepared to take industrial action they will then face a further ballot for that action.

Welsh RCN members also rejected the three percent pay offer and the union lodged an official dispute with the Welsh government.

The RCN began an indicative ballot of its 40,000 members in Scotland who rejected the Scottish government’s four percent rise. The ballot will be to determine what form of industrial action its members are prepared to take. The ballot closes November 8.

#### **UK National Health Service delivery drivers balloted over pay**

Around 200 UK drivers working for Unipart that deliver to hospitals are balloting over low pay.

The ballot of HGV and van drivers closes on November 5. The Unite members are responsible for delivering and collecting supplies and equipment from hospitals.

#### **Scottish teachers reject derisory pay offer**

Scottish teachers have rejected an insulting 1.22 percent pay offer.

The National Association of Schoolmasters, Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) members voted no by an 85 percent majority. The NASUWT is using the result to put pressure on employers to come up with an offer they can push through.

On the NASUWT website union general secretary, Patrick Roach, stated, “NASUWT members have been clear that they are willing to take further action on pay and we have put the Cabinet Secretary and employers on notice that no option is being discounted by the Union to obtain a fair pay award for teachers.”

#### **Technicians at Scottish north sea oil consortium to ballot over cuts to terms and conditions**

Several hundred workers employed by Ponticelli, and Semco Maritime in Scotland are balloting for strike action.

The ballot closes on November 15. The Unite members at the two companies provide maintenance services to Total Energy offshore platforms. They are opposed to the companies’ proposals to cut pay and conditions, which would see some workers lose up to £40,000 in the value of their pensions.

#### **Staff at electrical appliance depot in Cardiff, Wales vote to strike over pay**

Staff at Panasonic’s depot in Cardiff, Wales voted to walk out over pay.

The GMB union members had their pay frozen last year. This year the depot’s management offered one percent, a cut in real terms. However, when the workforce turned it down Panasonic withdrew the deal and put forward a pay freeze for a second year. A GMB press release on the ballot gave no dates for proposed action, only that it would be in the next few weeks.

#### **Consultative ballot of workers at London animal charity over cuts to jobs, pay and conditions**

Around 60 workers at the Mayhew animal charity in northwest London are taking part in a consultative ballot over attacks to the service.

The Unite union members are facing cuts in veterinary nurses, animal welfare officers and reception staff along with cuts to hours for cleaners. They also face a pay and recruitment freeze. Currently the charity is not accepting stray dogs or cats. The charity is banking on volunteers to make up any shortfalls.

#### **March by nursery school teaching staff in England over funding**

Representatives from around 150 maintained English nursery schools marched to Downing Street on Tuesday over lack of funding.

The marchers carried a petition signed by over 1,400 nursery teachers and leaders. They called on the government to increase funding for nurseries.

Maintained nursery schools cater for three to four-year-olds. They are led by a headteacher and have teachers qualified in early years. They are funded by local authorities. On average, each nursery lost about £70,000 in income over the last year as well as having to spend £8,000 on COVID-19 measures.

#### **Unite union suspends planned strike at plastic bottle manufacturer in Wigan, England**

A strike of around 150 workers at the Alpha UK plastic bottle plant in Wigan due to begin Wednesday was suspended by the Unite union.

The workers rejected a two percent pay offer, whereas other staff were offered three. Unite recommended a new offer made by the company and

is balloting its members this week. Details of the new offer were not made public by the union.

The workers were also demanding the company honour a 2020 pledge to increase pension contributions. They voted by a 90 percent majority on a more than 70 percent turnout to stop work. If the workers reject the new offer, 48-hour strikes planned for November 4 and 16 will go ahead.

The company makes plastic bottles and containers for firms such as Britvic, Coca Cola and Johnson & Johnson.

### **Strike of UK driving examiners over increasing workload suspended by union**

A planned two-day strike of Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency staff due to start Monday was suspended by the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union.

Around 1,000 DVSA staff voted for the stoppages over plans by management to increase the number of driving tests the examiners are expected to do from seven to eight. DVSA management agreed to postpone the introduction of the eighth test for at least a year. The PCS will hold meetings with the DVSA over workloads.

The PCS will arrange feedback meetings with DVSA staff but is recommending they accept the proposals.

## **Middle East**

### **Protests by teachers across Iran**

On October 13, current and retired teachers held protests in 40 cities across Iran.

Among the issues raised were poor working conditions, the increase of working hours from 24 to 30 hours a week and the poor state of education in the country.

### **Israeli medics end strike over length of shifts**

Thousands of Israeli medical residents, interns and medical students ended their programme of strikes on Wednesday over the length of the shifts they work.

The Israeli health minister agreed to reduce shift lengths from 26 hours down to 18 over the next four years. The medics originally called for work shifts to be reduced to 16 hours. The medics held a series of protests.

### **Strike by Israeli teachers at Jerusalem school over violence**

Teachers at the Ras El Amud school in east Jerusalem, Israel planned a strike on Wednesday called by the teachers' union,

They were protesting against violent attacks on teachers by students at the school that left five teachers injured.

## **Africa**

### **Water workers supplying three South African provinces strike for pay arrears**

Workers at Sedibeng Water in Free State, North West and Northern Cape provinces in South Africa stopped work indefinitely Tuesday. The company said they could not pay their October salary and they would not receive a recently agreed pay increase.

The South African Municipal Workers' Union members were told Sedibeng Water was not paid for their services by local municipalities in the three provinces. Over two million water users could face shortages.

### **South African Metrobus drivers to resume strike in Johannesburg over pay and allowances**

South African bus drivers are threatening to resume their two-month stoppage, begun in May at the city-owned Metrobus in Johannesburg, to demand an 18 percent pay rise, a daily allowance and a COVID-19 allowance.

The Democratic Municipal and Allied Workers Union of South Africa members say they suspended their strike because of the lockdown but now plan to resume, possibly before the November 1 municipal elections.

### **South African drivers and mechanics at Johannesburg bus company protest non-payment of salaries**

Workers at the Autopax company, a subsidiary of the state-owned Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa), stopped work October 13 and marched in protest to the employer's offices in Johannesburg.

The Numsa and South African Transport and Allied Workers Union members at Autopax, employing over 900, have not received their September salary. April and May payments were also late, and workers do not have enough for food and rent.

Prasa admits to cash flow problems and plans to make redundancies but also demanded extra funds from the department of transport.

### **Negotiations begin in South African gold miners pay dispute**

South African gold miners in a pay award dispute with the Sebanye-Stillwater multinational mining company held their initial meeting with the employer, under supervision of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration, on Tuesday. A further meeting is planned for the second week of November.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), and Solidarity union members demand pay rises comparable with those negotiated with other major South African gold mining operations. Solidarity accused Sebanye-Stillwater of "spending more time preparing for a possible strike than trying to reach a settlement."

In 2019, the AMCU sold out a five-month gold miners' strike at

Sibanye Stillwater Gold. It accepted a wage agreement, already signed off by the NUM and Solidarity, which it previously called a “slave labour deal.”

### **Health workers' strike over substandard conditions enters second week in Embu, Kenya**

Health workers in Embu state, Kenya, who walked out on October 12 in protest at poor working conditions, are continuing their stoppage.

The 2,400 Kenyan Medical Practitioners Pharmacists and Dentists Union members brought health services to a halt and pledged to continue until grievances are addressed by the local administration.

The Embu Level Five Hospital is very dirty and lacks the drugs needed by patients. Patients are given a substandard diet. Casual workers were not cleaning the wards due to not being paid. Workers questioned how the authorities expected them to deliver services in such unhygienic conditions. They are at risk of getting diseases from the hospitals.

### **Nurses in Taita Taveta, Kenya to demonstrate over non-payment of salaries**

On Tuesdays and Fridays each week, nurses in Taita Taveta, Kenya will walk out to demonstrate over non-payment of their December to March and September salaries. The action is likely to bring the health service in the county to a standstill.

The Kenya National Union of Nurses members are among the thousands of staff in the county denied salaries for months.

### **Union calls off local government workers' strike in Kenyan capital**

Around 11,000 local government workers in Nairobi, Kenya were told to return to work by the Kenya County Government Workers Union after two days on strike.

The stoppage began on October 13 over non-implementation of a Collective Bargaining Agreement going back to 2013. The union sat on workers' grievances for years, including lack of promotions, repeated delays in salary payments and failure to remit statutory deductions. At least 12,496 workers have been without medical cover since July. Another grievance is lack of personal protective equipment.

The union claimed a victory, but the government have agreed to workers' demands before and reneged on them.

### **Ivory Coast cocoa growers strike to protest loss of income**

A strike by cocoa growers in the Ivory Coast began on October 12 after cocoa prices slumped.

The strike was called by the National Association of Ivorian Producers with around 600,000 members in the country. The growers are demanding a 17 billion CFA francs subsidy promised by the government to help farmers deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A big harvest last season combined with a drop in consumption due to the pandemic led to a drop in local cocoa prices and a fall in income.

The Ivory Coast has about one million cocoa growers, most of whom are farming smallholdings up to 5 hectares.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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