

Romanian transport workers in wildcat strike against pay cuts joined by striking teachers and public sector workers; workers at Fiat Plastic in Kragujevac, Serbia continue year-long indefinite strike against pay cuts; teachers protest across Iran over pay and conditions; South African dairy workers continue strike over attacks on pay and conditions, other workers threaten to join action

## 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.*

Europe

### Transport workers in Bucharest, Romania begin wildcat strike over pay cuts

On Thursday, hundreds of workers at the Bucharest Transport Company (STB) began an indefinite wildcat strike, after the budget for the new year was announced with a lower total salary fund, and the STB director refused to negotiate a pay increase.

AGERPRES reported that over 600 workers protested outside the STB headquarters on Wednesday to call for pay increases and the resignation of the director. During rush hour on Thursday morning, no trams or buses were running on the STB network.

STB, owned directly by the city government, runs the overground transport network in the Romanian capital, and employs approximately 10,000 workers.

The president of the Bucharest Transport Workers' Union, which represents most STB workers, took pains to insist that the union had not organised the strike, but added that it would not end without the resignation of STB's director. The police were deployed in metro stations, not run by STB, where scab trains were put in service.

At 4pm on Thursday *Spotmedia.ro* reported that the Bucharest Tribunal approved STB's request to order work to resume, with criminal charges possible for any workers who remain on strike.

### Teachers and other public sector workers in Romania strike against cuts

On Wednesday, the two major teachers' unions in Romania called a two-hour warning strike in all schools after the government announced a real terms pay cut for 2022, in violation of a 2017 law which sets pay rises.

The Minister for Education admitted that the 4.5 percent pay rise, far below Romania's current 8.2 percent rate of inflation, was half that specified by law, and that teachers had not received a promised eight percent pay rise for 2021 either. Perversely, he cited the unsafe reopening of schools while COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to surge as a reason to oppose the strike. He told *Realitatea TV*, "I am convinced that the vast majority of teachers, although I know that they are right from this perspective, of the salary demands, will not abandon the pupils, given that we have managed to start the second semester with a physical presence in all schools and kindergartens in Romania."

Healthcare workers held a symbolic strike in December against the same violation of the 2017 pay law, after the government froze the pay of many in the sector and others received only a quarter of the promised increase.

Workers in the National Environment Guard also held a two-hour spontaneous protest on Thursday last week to denounce the government for freezing their pay for many years, according to *Mediafax*. The National Union of the Environment Guard said, "We are the lowest-paid public institution in the whole country," and added that with their workload and low pay "it is difficult to live [and] to do your job properly."

### Workers at Fiat Plastic in Kragujevac, Serbia, continue year-long indefinite strike against pay cuts

Last week, workers at the Fiat Plastic factory in the Serbian city of Kragujevac resumed their long-running indefinite strike after the factory, owned by a subsidiary of global auto giant Stellantis, was shut down over Christmas. *021* reported that the strike committee is planning to sue the company for discrimination, after it refused to pay a bonus to striking

workers.

The strike began with partial stoppages in January 2021 after wages were cut by 300 euros, and escalated to an all-out strike the following month. Workers formed their own independent union after they said they were abandoned by their unions. They declared the strike will not end until the pay cut is cancelled, workers who were illegally sent on leave are returned to work, and the company returns all machinery removed during the strike.

After meetings with Fiat representatives and government officials, the strike committee issued a statement in November stating, “The Government of the Republic of Serbia has openly sided with employers and consciously against workers, which we are witnessing every day in our country, and not only in Serbia.”

### **Dutch metalworkers continue strikes in collective bargaining dispute**

Last week, metalworkers in the Netherlands took part in 24-hour regional strikes as part of a long-running dispute over the collective agreement covering smaller companies in the sector, which employs around 320,000 workers.

Workers in the southern provinces of North Brabant and Limburg stopped work on January 13, and in North Holland on January 14.

The employers’ association is demanding the pay increase be limited to 1.4 percent, while inflation in the Netherlands has recently increased to 5.7 percent, the *Noordhollands Dagblad* reported. The unions concluded a separate collective agreement in July for large metal companies, which employ altogether 260,000 workers, which provided a 2.3 percent pay rise in 2021 and three percent for 2022.

### **French healthcare workers extend strikes over pay and understaffing**

Healthcare workers in France have continued protests and strikes this week over the issue of low pay and understaffing in the sector.

On Tuesday, three unions in the health and social care sector called for a national one-day strike and demonstrations among workers who were not included in a 183-euro bonus recommended by the “Séjour” healthcare review in 2020. The unions said that between 450,000 and a million workers were in one of the professional groups excluded from the bonus, reported *Ouest France*.

At the private hospital Océane in the town of Vannes, dozens of workers walked out for an hour on Tuesday and Wednesday morning, denouncing the hospital management for treating them with “disrespect and contempt.” According to *Le Télégramme*, workers at the hospital were told they would receive a 600-euro bonus for 2021, but then shortly after Christmas Océane announced they would only be paid 230 euros.

Midwives at the hospital began an indefinite strike in October, as they are paid 25 percent less than midwives in the public sector. Elsan, which runs Océane, requisitioned the striking midwives, hiring bailiffs to threaten them with a possible six-month prison sentence and 10,000 euro fine if they did not return to work.

The Elsan group had a turnover of 2.2 billion euros in 2020.

A one-hour protest strike also took place in the town of Plœmeur on Tuesday, where 130 workers at the local health centre stopped work to raise concerns about an announced plan to “return to financial balance.”

### **Waste collection workers in Marseille, France resume strike as union accuses city of renegeing on agreement**

On Tuesday, waste collection workers in the French city of Marseille began an indefinite strike, after the Force Ouvrière (FO) union accused the city government of renegeing on the agreement which ended the previous strike in December.

FO ended the nearly two-month long strike after the city agreed to reduce working hours for bin collection workers by 15 percent from the 35 hours required by a new law. Previously, workers went home after completing their collections, but the city was trying to enforce a 35-hour week.

According to *BFMTV*, FO says the city government claimed, after the deal had been signed, it could not agree to paying a bonus for working on Sundays and nights.

### **Two thousand Spanish home care workers begin partial strikes over collective agreement**

This week, workers at private companies providing home care in the Spanish province of Ciudad Real stopped work for one hour each day in a dispute over their collective agreement.

According to *ABC*, the collective agreement expired in January 2021, and the unions report that the employers’ association Fecir stopped negotiating in October and refused to increase wages unless savings were found in other areas such as seniority pay. The unions announced that if Fecir does not begin negotiating again they will call an indefinite stoppage.

### **Workers in day-care centre at Ghent University in Belgium strike against privatisation**

Last week, workers at the day-care centre run by Ghent University, one of Belgium’s largest universities, held a one-day strike to oppose plans to privatise the service.

*Het Laatste Nieuws* reported that on Tuesday all university staff received an email announcing “savings” measures to ensure the university would remain “financially healthy.” These included cutting health insurance, cancelling leave, increasing fees for postgraduate students and privatising the day-care centres (crèches). The General Union of Public Services responded by calling a one-day stoppage on Thursday, and says a larger action is being prepared.

### **Scaffolders at British Steel plant in Scunthorpe vote overwhelmingly to continue pay strike**

After 12 weeks on strike, scaffolders employed by Actavo at the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe voted by an 83 percent majority to continue their action in 2022.

The 62 Unite union members are demanding payment in line with the National Agreement for the Engineering and Construction Industry (NAECI) rates of £17.45 an hour. They are paid 10-15 percent less than

NAECI rates.

Actavo (UK) is under contract to British Steel's Scunthorpe site to provide scaffolding and at-height services. The site, which employs 3,000, was taken over by Chinese steelmaker Jingye Group in March 2020 in a £50 million deal.

Unite called for tripartite talks between itself, British Steel and Actavo.

### **Refuse collection drivers in Coventry, England continue strikes with all-out stoppage over pay and conditions**

It was announced on Monday that around 70 UK refuse collection drivers working for Labour-run Coventry City council will begin all-out strike action from January 31 until March 23.

The escalation of the action by the Unite union members follows a four-day stoppage last week, as well as previous four-day and two-day stoppages. They are also operating an overtime ban. They are protesting pay and Christmas leave arrangements.

The strike vote was by a 98.5 percent majority. The Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers' pay starts at just £22,183 a year. It takes 11 years of service to reach the top of the pay scale. There is a UK-wide shortage of HGV drivers, and some councils increased pay or made retention payments to keep refuse collection drivers.

Coventry council also tried to make last-minute changes to workers' contracts, with a buy-out option to make Christmas working compulsory. For the last 20 years, this was voluntary.

Unite originally proposed that drivers strike every alternate hour throughout their shift, returning to depot during the strike. The council rejected this as "impractical." The drivers then took standard strike action. Bin collection workers did not strike.

The council refused to negotiate, with Labour councillors denouncing the strike on social media, claiming some refuse workers earn £50,000 a year. A Unite union protest was due Tuesday, to coincide with a council meeting with the union.

### **UK Just Eat delivery drivers' strike continues over pay cuts**

Just Eat delivery drivers in Sheffield, England continued their programme of walkouts over pay cuts. Pickets gathered outside McDonald's fast-food outlet on Queens Road in Sheffield on Monday.

The Independent Workers Union of Great Britain members are employed by Stuart Delivery, subcontracted to deliver fast food for chains such as McDonalds. The initial strike of Stuart Delivery drivers was in Sheffield on December 6. Further strikes followed both in Sheffield and other places such as Chesterfield and Huddersfield.

They are protesting a cut in the base rate for deliveries from £4.50 per delivery to £3.40 per delivery. The strikers are demanding £6 per delivery.

Stuart's profits rose 30 percent in 2020, and its highest earning director was awarded a 1,000 percent pay rise to £2 million.

### **Further dates announced in strike by bus drivers in Greater Manchester, England over pay**

Around 300 UK bus drivers working for First Bus, based in Oldham

near Manchester were on strike Thursday, following three days of walkouts last week. The company operates routes across Greater Manchester.

The Unite union members are seeking a pay increase. Their current basic rate of pay is just £12.40 an hour. The drivers also want any settlement backdated to August 1, 2021, but the company is refusing to do so. Stoppages are also due January 24 and 26. On Wednesday, Unite announced an escalation of the dispute and announced strike dates beginning January 31 and extending through February, meaning three days of stoppages each week.

As is usual, Unite has not announced any target figure for an improved pay offer. A recent Unite union survey highlighted driver shortages at 99 percent of garages, with low pay being cited as the reason. First Bus parent company FirstGroup made an operating profit of £224.3 million last year, with reserves of more than three quarters of a billion pounds.

Over the past months, Unite agreed below-inflation pay deals at bus companies across the UK, keeping all the disputes separate.

### **Hospital security workers at London hospital begin six-week strike over pay and conditions**

Security staff at Great Ormond Street Hospital in the UK capital began a six-week strike on Tuesday. It follows a three-day strike in early December.

The United Voices of the World members are seeking parity on pay, sick pay, annual leave, parental leave and career progression with staff directly employed by the National Health Service. They are employed by outsourcing company, Carlisle Support Services.

### **Walkout by economic forecasting staff at UK institute over pay**

Economic forecasters working for the London based National Institute of Economics and Social Research (NIESR) will walk out on Friday for two weeks.

The Unite union members are seeking a pay rise. NIESR is proposing a pay freeze for the year 2020-21 and just two percent for the year 2021-22. With Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation currently running at 7.1 percent the offer is a cut in real terms. The strike may mean forecasts on the UK and global economies may not be published.

### **Strikes by dock workers at Sheerness, UK over job cuts**

Dockers working for GB Southern Terminals at Sheerness, on the Thames and Medway estuary in England, are walking out each Thursday in January, to be followed by five days a week in February and March.

The Unite union members oppose plans by the employer to cut 75 percent of jobs or 50 jobs by imposing "fire and rehire" measures. The company also plans to cut overtime through the use of time off in lieu, and restrict skilled work rates to specific tasks.

The dockers are responsible for unloading Volkswagen (VW) cars off ferries arriving at the terminal.

The strike dates are targeted to impact the supply of 2022-plate VW vehicles in the UK. The VW Sheerness contract is up for renewal, and

Unite is appealing to VW either to pressure GB terminals to drop its plans or to award the contract to another bidder.

### **Further strikes by teaching staff at Newham Sixth Form College, London against privatisation**

The dispute by teachers at Newham Sixth Form College in east London is continuing into the new year. They voted by a 98 percent majority to strike against academisation, workloads and management bullying.

The National Education Union members walked out for two days last week, and began a three-day strike Tuesday. Further stoppages are planned.

### **Strike by taxi drivers in Leeds, UK over council policy**

UK taxi drivers in Leeds held a 24-hour strike Monday. They are involved in a long-running dispute with Leeds City Council's Suitability and Convictions Policy, enacted in February 2020. The taxi drivers argue the policy is too restrictive and can be used against drivers involved in a minor issue such as an argument, resulting in them losing their licence.

### **Luxury retail car chain technicians in England to walk out at nine outlets over pay**

Around 180 UK technicians working for luxury car chain Mercedes-Benz Retail Group (MBRG) are to strike over pay.

The technicians, based at nine retail outlets including Croydon, Heathrow and Watford, voted by majorities of between 80 and 100 percent to walk out in a four-day stoppage from January 25. MBRG initially refused them a pay rise this year, following no rise last year, but then made a 1.5 percent offer which was rejected.

According to a Unite press release, MBRG offered a pay rise to non-Unite members, but gave no details.

### **Airline food delivery drivers at UK's Heathrow airport ballot over pay, conditions and pensions**

Around 100 HGV drivers working for Vienna based DO & CO are balloting over pay, conditions and pensions. The Unite union members deliver airline catering supplies to major airlines such as BA and Cathay Pacific at London's Heathrow airport. The ballot closes February 11.

The company is refusing to discuss pay or update the current working agreement. There are also concerns over the company's pension investment strategy.

In the summer of 2020, around 1,800 aviation catering workers were TUPED (transferred with current employment terms) from Gate Gourmet and DHL Supply Service Chain to DO & CO Event and Airline Catering Ltd. This was during a COVID spike and subsequent lockdown, which badly affected airlines and airline related industries. Subsequent to their transfer, around 1,000 of the workers were made redundant by DO & CO.

### **Scottish teachers reject pay offer and indicate willingness to strike**

In an indicative ballot, Scottish teachers rejected a pay offer which would represent a big pay cut in real terms. An 83 percent majority of the NASUWT members said they would be willing to strike. The offer comprised a one percent pay rise backdated to last April, and a one percent rise from January 2022 plus a £100 one-off payment.

The NASUWT gave no indication of acting on the ballot result. National Official Mike Corbett said, "If they value education and value teachers, they need to show it through the tabling of an improved pay offer."

### **UK civil servants to ballot over pay claim**

UK public sector civil servants are to take part in an indicative ballot as part of their pay claim.

The Professional and Commercial Services (PCS) members will ballot between February 14 and March 21, to see what action they are prepared to take in support of their pay claim. The claim includes a 10 percent cost of living rise, with a minimum living wage of £15 an hour and a minimum of 35 days annual leave.

### **Local authority workers in Northern Ireland to ballot over pay**

Workers in local authorities in Northern Ireland, the education authority and the housing executive are to ballot for industrial action.

The Unite union members are seeking a 10 percent pay rise. They were offered a 1.75 percent increase. The ballot open January 24, and runs for four weeks.

### **British Council staff to ballot in opposition to privatisation and redundancies**

Staff employed by the British Council, the UK's cultural and educational body, are to ballot for strike action.

The PCS members are demanding no compulsory redundancies, and oppose the privatisation and outsourcing of their jobs as a result of a "transformation" of the body's role. The British Council employs staff across the world, who will be taking part in the ballot.

They voted by an 80 percent majority in an 80 percent turnout to strike in a consultative ballot carried out at the end of last year. The strike ballot begins Friday until February 25.

### **Nurses in Northern Ireland to ballot on three percent pay offer**

Nurses working for the government body Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland are balloting on a below three percent pay offer.

The ballot of Royal College of Nursing (RCN) members opened on January 13 and closes February 10. Indicative ballots of RCN members in England, Scotland and Wales gave majority votes in favour of striking but on low turnouts, and the union is sitting on its hands.

### **UK teachers at Somerset school to ballot over excessive workloads**

UK teachers at the Gordano School in Somerset are balloting for strike action, with the ballot due to close Thursday.

The National Education Union members are protesting the excessive workload at the school run by the Lighthouse Schools Partnership. The workload increased in recent months and is impacting on their welfare.

### **Train cleaners in southeast England to ballot over pay**

Workers employed by outsourcing company Churchill to clean trains in southeast England are balloting for improved pay.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union members work on four separate contracts to clean trains for rail companies such as Thameslink, Southern and Eurostar. Some of the cleaners are on the legal minimum of £8.91 an hour, while others are on £9.90 an hour. The cleaners are also seeking occupational sick pay and travel facilities in line with other rail workers. The ballot closes on February 1.

### **UK university staff at seven more institutions vote to walk out over pensions and pay**

Following a rebalot of university staff at 42 UK colleges and universities carried out by the University and College Union (UCU), seven voted with the necessary minimum 50 percent turnout to walk out.

They included Newcastle, Swansea and City, University of London.

UCU members at 58 UK universities held a three-day stoppage beginning December 3, over a year-long pensions dispute, which the UCU refers to as the “Four Fights”: over pay, workloads, casualisation and equality. Most universities did not take part in the action, as they failed to meet the 50 percent turnout requirement set by the anti-strike laws, a rule brought in with no resistance from the trade unions.

With further strikes planned for this year, the UCU decided to rebalot those institutions that failed to achieve the 50 percent threshold, but which did reach 40 percent.

In 2018, mass opposition of UCU members to an attempt to sell out a national strike over pensions and conditions involving 50,000 workers forced General Secretary Sally Hunt to resign. Her replacement, pseudo-left-backed Jo Grady, has since worked to prevent a unified offensive against the employers.

### **Unite accepts below-inflation pay offer at dumper truck manufacturer in Leamington Spa, England**

Around 60 workers at dumper truck manufacturer Thwaites Ltd in

Leamington Spa, England voted to strike after rejecting a three percent pay offer. Following the vote, the company came back with a revised offer of 5.5 percent backdated to September last year, which was supported by Unite.

Unite described the offer as “vastly improved,” citing the figure being above the RPI inflation rate in September. However, RPI is now running at 7.1 percent, and workers’ spending power is being eroded.

### **GMB union ends strike of refuse drivers in Eastbourne, England**

On Tuesday, the GMB union ended the strike of 20 HGV refuse collection drivers working for South East Environmental Services Ltd (SEES) in Eastbourne.

The refuse lorry drivers took six days of strikes, including on Tuesday, with a further eight scheduled. They were protesting low pay and “barbaric” conditions, with only two toilets for 100 employees and inadequate washing facilities. The drivers voted unanimously to walk out. The drivers were on near-minimum-wage levels.

A GMB press release of January 18 claims the deal represents a near 19 percent pay increase, but notes the minimum hourly rate for drivers will only rise to £13.50 an hour by April 2023. According to Eastbourne council, the highest paid drivers will get a five percent increase, while the lowest paid will get 15 percent.

The stoppages affected around 50,000 households in the Eastbourne area. SEES is wholly owned by Eastbourne Council

### **Workers in Belfast, Northern Ireland, occupying hostel to prevent its closure receive suspension letters**

Workers at the Regina Coeli House in West Belfast, Northern Ireland, who occupied it after the authorities announced its closure, received letters threatening suspension from management.

The letters accuse them of breaching the security and safety of the residents. Residents were told they must go to alternative accommodation and leave the hostel by arranged taxi bookings.

The hostel provides women-only accommodation for 21 women at risk of homelessness, mental health breakdown or domestic abuse. The facility was run down during the pandemic, and currently has only six residents.

The Unite union members are calling for the Stormont government to intervene to save the hostel, and launched a petition to keep the hostel open. They were given notice of redundancy with effect from February 27.

### **Hospital workers in Croydon, England to protest over withdrawal of COVID sick pay**

Cleaners and porters working at Croydon hospital in south London plan to protest after contractor G4S stopped occupational sick pay for workers testing positive for COVID-19. Without sick pay workers are forced to come into work while having COVID-19 symptoms.

The protest organised by the GMB union will take place at noon on January 31 outside the hospital.

Middle East

## **Teachers protest across Iran over pay and conditions**

Protests by hundreds of teachers took place on January 13 in around 50 cities across Iran, including Tehran, Shiraz and Ahvaz.

Among their demands were for their pay and pensions to be in line with those of university teachers, the release of teachers imprisoned in previous demonstrations, increased job security and an end to the use of temporary contracts.

At least 10 teachers were arrested as a result of the protests, including the Khuzestan Teachers' Union general secretary.

## **Further protests by Israeli Foreign Ministry workers over pay and conditions**

Israeli Foreign Ministry workers held further protests this week, which will lead to an all-out stoppage. They are refusing to register the births of babies born by surrogate mothers on behalf of Israeli families in Colombia, Georgia and the United States. These countries are the most popular for Israelis seeking surrogates.

These actions are part of an ongoing campaign against the Ministry's refusal to pay overtime. The workers are also only working regular hours. The ministry staff are paid for two on-call days a month to cover contact with Israeli embassies abroad. They are expected to be available other days in the month without pay. In 2019, when other Israeli government ministries saw an average five percent budget increase, the Foreign Ministry saw a near 15 percent reduction.

Foreign Ministry workers based in India, Nepal and the Philippines stopped issuing visas for workers seeking to go to Israel to work in nursing or agriculture.

## **Palestinian refugees in Lebanon hold strike to protest lack of COVID-19 measures**

Palestinian refugees living in 12 UN-registered refugee camps across Lebanon held a strike Monday.

The protests were against the lack of action by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to the spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant in the camps. Teachers' union leader Fatah Sharif called on influential Palestinians to demand UNRWA "intervene urgently."

Africa

## **South African dairy workers continue strike over attacks on pay and conditions, other workers threaten to join action**

As the strike by 5,000 Clover Foods workers in South Africa over pay cuts and retrenchments is entering its ninth week, workers remain determined in the face of threatening phone calls and petrol bomb attacks on their cars.

The General Industries Workers Union of South Africa and the Food and Allied Workers Union members may be joined by other workers affected by the jobs destroyed along the supply chain and by the economic impact of Clover factory closures on small towns.

Clover intends to close four factories with the loss of 1,000 jobs to save R300 million, introduce 12-hour days worked over four days in every six without overtime pay and increase workloads by reducing staff numbers. Workers face pay cuts of 20 percent. The company closed one factory in Western Cape. Three more in North West province, Free State and Gauteng could close in the first quarter of 2022. About 1,600 Clover workers were retrenched during 2021. The company proposes a further 800 job losses by February.

The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration ruled that Clover should pay workers the end-of-year thirteenth cheque, withheld to try and enforce a return to work. Workers complained, however, that either they did not receive the owed bonus, or they received only a small amount.

The unions are calling for government intervention, including nationalisation of Clover, which was acquired in 2019 by Milco SA, a consortium including Israel's Central Bottling Company. They complain that Clover disregarded South African law and regulatory authorities, including the terms and conditions attached to the merger.

## **Health workers protest job cuts affecting 2,700 in Eastern Cape, South Africa**

Over 70 community health workers demonstrated on Monday at Eastern Cape's provincial legislature in Bisho, South Africa against job cuts and for permanent contracts. They called for national government intervention to "prevent a catastrophic health crisis" in the province.

Job cuts could affect up to 2,700 workers, including 91 doctors, 634 nurses and 128 medical staff.

The protesting National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union members, many hired at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, regularly have their contracts renewed, but the provincial health department now says posts will end in March with no money available for the next two years of the current budget. Permanent workers say they will be unable to cope with the pressure caused by the pandemic and the chronic understaffing once contracts end.

## **South African miners at Sibanye-Stillwater still in deadlock with owners over pay increase**

Miners at Sibanye-Stillwater gold mines, South Africa, in dispute with their employer over ongoing wage negotiations, were given a certificate of non-resolution from the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

The certificate means the National Union of Mineworkers, Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, Solidarity, and UASA union members are legally permitted to go on strike within the next 12 months. However, the unions are hoping that new discussions will result in a final offer from the company to avoid any confrontation.

The workers, who want pay rises comparable with those negotiated with other major South African gold mining operations, are demanding a R1,000 a month rise. Sibanye-Stillwater offered increases for most workers of R480 a month in year one, R570 in year two, and R600 in year

three, with artisans and officials offered 4.1 percent in year one, and 4.7 percent in years two and three.

### **South African ANC staff strike in protest over ongoing salary crisis**

African National Congress (ANC) administrative staff at ANC HQ, Luthuli House, Johannesburg and other provincial offices stopped work Monday, as part of ongoing intermittent strikes over unpaid salaries. On Tuesday, staff met with the ANC's treasurer-general.

Workers have still not been paid for November and December, with the problem stretching back as far as July. They also protest unemployment insurance and hospital fund arrears, and four years without salary increments.

President Cyril Ramaphosa said the party remains concerned, but blames their financial problems on the pandemic and the newly introduced Political Party Funding Act, designed to increase regulation of political funding.

### **South African Parliament staff refuse to return to work over safety fears after fire**

Employees of the South African Houses of Parliament, including security and catering staff, protested outside the Parliament gates Monday, over unsafe working conditions after a recent severe fire.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union members will not return to work until they have written safety guarantees.

### **Nigerian college and polytechnic workers in Benue walk out on strike, join university workers in Plateau State**

Workers at colleges and polytechnics in Benue State, Nigeria walked out on strike on January 13.

The Academic Staff Union of Tertiary Institutions in Benue State members' grievances include the non-payment of five months arrears from 2017 salaries, and non-implementation of both the contributory pension scheme and the minimum wage.

The union met with the state government on January 12, but no agreement was reached.

The workers joined university workers at Plateau State University on indefinite strike over the state government's refusal to implement the minimum wage. The Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities members voted on January 13 to continue the stoppage to demand payment of arrears of over N300 million in unpaid salaries and allowances.

### **Demonstrating factory workers attacked and arrested by police in Oyo State, Nigeria**

On January 13, Nigerian workers in Oyo State, protesting over low pay and bad working conditions, were attacked and arrested by state forces.

The workers are employed by manufacturing company Extreme Manufacturing Nigeria Limited.

Those arrested were forced to pay N5,000 bail to get released from jail.

The workers suffered another attack on a peaceful protest on Saturday—by officers of the Joint Security Task Force—a force previously used against Al Qaeda and other terrorists, in an operation codenamed “Operation Burst.”

### **Zimbabwe teachers in Harare arrested for protesting peacefully over low salaries**

Sixteen teachers were arrested in Harare, Zimbabwe for protesting peacefully on January 12 over low salaries of just over R2,300.

The government accused the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe members of “gathering with intent to promote public violence,” and opposed granting them bail.



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