

National healthcare strikes across Greece over pay and job insecurity; Hungarian teachers protest following government's attack on right to strike; UK High Court attack on picketing continues at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital; food workers' three-month strike to defend jobs and pay continues at Clover, South Africa

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

National healthcare strikes across Greece over pay and job insecurity

In the past two weeks there have been three national strikes across Greece in the healthcare sector against job insecurity and low pay.

On February 16, the Panhellenic Federation of Public Hospital Employees (POEDIN) called a three-hour stoppage for hospital workers on fixed-term contracts, demanding new contracts and an end to outsourcing. The contracts of 8,000 workers will expire at the end of March, reported *ef.syn*.

A further two-hour strike of doctors and nurses was called for the morning of February 18, according to *Kathimerini*, also called by POEDIN. The union demanded an increase in hazard pay and its extension to all specialities.

On Wednesday POEDIN and the Federation of Hospital Doctors Associations of Greece (OENGE) called a one-day strike, denouncing the deterioration of working conditions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. *ef.syn* reported that both POEDIN and OENGE called for increased recruitment, permanent contracts for all workers, and increases to pay and funding for services. Despite high levels of COVID-19 prevalence, POEDIN also called for an end to the vaccine requirement for hospital workers.

Slovenian healthcare workers on national strike over pay

Almost 50,000 healthcare workers in Slovenia joined a one-day strike last week during pay negotiations with the government, according to *RTV Slovenija*. All non-emergency health services were affected by the strike, called after the unions accused the government of refusing to negotiate.

Italian school students hold widespread protests against compulsory unpaid internships after the death of two classmates

On February 18, tens of thousands of students throughout Italy gathered to protest the "work-school alternation" programme imposed in 2015, where they are required to work unpaid internships before they can graduate.

The protests were triggered by the deaths of two students, 18-year-old Lorenzo Parelli and 16-year-old Giuseppe Lenoci, in industrial accidents during their internships, *Forbes* reported. Workplace deaths are extremely common in Italy, two student groups told *ANSA*, citing figures which show 1,400 deaths at work in 2021. The slogans at the protest covered by the agency included, "Your profits, our deaths," and "We will not be your slaves."

Italian workers join national one-day strike against breakup of Telecom Italia Group

On Wednesday, workers at the TIM Group (formerly Telecom Italia), Italy's largest telecoms provider, joined a national one-day strike to oppose the sale of part of the company to a private equity firm.

TIM employs 42,000 people throughout Italy. According to *ANSA*, thousands of people joined protests on the day of the strike, called by the unions at TIM Group. The agency reported that 600 workers were at a

protest in Turin, where the unions say 3,000 jobs are at risk throughout Piedmont, and another 6,000 jobs that depend indirectly on the company.

Midwives begin indefinite strike in Lyon, France

On Monday, 85 of the 93 midwives at the Lyon-Sud hospital in France's third-largest city began an indefinite strike against plans to make 10 job cuts and close five beds, *20 Minutes* reported.

The management claimed the cuts were justified as only 2,000 births took place when the hospital had a target of 2,500, but one midwife told *20 Minutes* that even with the lower number of births the maternity ward was understaffed. *Lyon Mag* reported on a petition opposing the job cuts and bed closures on change.org, which as of Thursday afternoon had gathered nearly 10,000 signatures.

School staff in France strike over class closures, pay and working conditions

This week workers in schools in France walked out on strike over issues including working conditions, pay, and the cutting of teaching hours.

Le Télégramme reported that on Tuesday teachers at Brocéliande college in the Breton town of Guer walked out after the allocated teaching time was cut from 512 hours to 476 hours and a class was closed. The National Union of Secondary Education (SNES-FSU) said this would lead to job losses, as well as reduced subject options for students. The hours allocated to each school in France are decided annually by the government, and there have been many local protests and stoppages in schools where hours were cut this year.

In the city of Angers, nursery assistants and extracurricular activity leaders began a six-week campaign of partial stoppages. The strike notice was filed by several unions representing school staff, to call for an increase in working hours for nursery assistants—many of whom work part-time and on fixed-term contracts—and to improve working conditions for activity leaders who often work long hours, according to *Ouest France*.

Hungarian teachers protest following government attack on right to strike

Over the past two weeks, dozens of teachers throughout Hungary held numerous small protests to oppose the government's attempts to ban them from striking, and against victimisations.

Teachers faced reprisals after 20,000 teachers joined a two-hour warning strike on February 1. Teachers' unions plan a strike on March 16, but the government has imposed an onerous requirement for strikers to ensure half of classes go ahead and childcare is provided. *Népszava* reported that since the warning strike some teachers who took part have been given additional work in retaliation, and one school announced it would not be paying agreed bonuses.

According to *Népszava*, a dozen teachers in the Szent László Gimnázium in Budapest joined a protest last week. On Tuesday, *24.hu* reported that 30 teachers in the Bethlen Gábor school protested outside the school in the morning, and on Wednesday between 100 and 150 teachers and parents protested in the capital.

Metalworkers in Asturias, Spain, strike against contract signed by most unions, ArcelorMittal threatens job cuts

Metalworkers at plants of multinational steel company ArcelorMittal in the Spanish principality of Asturias walked out on Wednesday, following four earlier strike days this month. More stoppages are planned for Monday and Tuesday.

They are demanding job security from the upcoming decarbonisation plan, as well as improved conditions for workers on temporary contracts and the enforcing of "relief contracts" agreed for older workers in the last collective agreement. Stoppages were called by the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the Left-wing Union Current (CSI) after most unions at the company reached a deal on these issues. CCOO and CSI members voted again to approve the strikes at the start of this month.

The company responded by diverting raw materials away from its Asturian plants, and threatening job cuts. According to *La Nueva España*, ArcelorMittal said the strike put at risk a one-billion-euro investment plan with the European Union to fund its decarbonisation plan, which already envisages 960 job cuts. It also threatened workers at its plant in Sestao in the Basque Country with the complete closure of their facility if they do not accept an "emergency" plan rewriting their working conditions.

According to *Europa Press*, ArcelorMittal made a profit of €13.1 billion in 2021 and launched a share buyback programme this month valued at €877 million.

Unions suspend strike in fish-canning sector in Spain

A demonstration of workers in the Spanish fish-canning sector, planned for Saturday in the Galician town of Boiro, was called off after the unions reached a pre-agreement with the employers' association Feicopesca over pay and job security.

The General Workers' Union (UGT) and Galician nationalist Galician Unions Confederacy (CIG) approved the deal. The CCOO said the pre-agreement was a "betrayal," but said it would still put it to a vote of its members. Three planned 24-hour strikes in March were also cancelled.

The four-year agreement sets a pay rise in line with inflation for 2021, an increase of 1 percent for 2022 and 1.5 percent for each of 2023 and 2024, with a clause to adjust pay for inflation at the end of each year. The CCOO said it did not deal with the issue of pay inequality, adding only an extra 0.3 percent pay increase to the lower-paid categories, which mostly contain women. This figure had already been offered by Feicopesca and rejected in previous negotiations, *Europa Press* reported.

Finnish AKT union calls off strike at Finnair

On February 16, the Finnish Automobile and Transport Workers' Union (AKT) called off a strike planned for Tuesday at the national airline Finnair, after the union and company accepted a proposal from the National Mediator.

AKT originally called the strike of cabin crew after Finnair proposed cuts to pay and working conditions, following cuts already made throughout the pandemic. According to the Finnish Broadcasting

Company, the two-year agreement includes a pay freeze for this year and ties any increase next year to an upturn in the technology and chemical industries.

London Underground workers to strike over jobs and pensions after mediation talks break down

London Underground (LU) workers will strike on March 1 and 3 against ongoing attacks on jobs and pensions, after talks broke down at government mediation service Acas.

The strike, which will involve around 10,000 Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members, is expected to shut down much of the Tube network. LU bosses admit they expect “severe disruption.”

Employer Transport for London (TfL) is facing a funding crisis after years of cuts by central government and by Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan. The government has exploited the collapse of revenue during the pandemic to accelerate its attack. TfL announced that it would axe around 600 Tube station posts, and a review of the pension scheme was a condition of short-term bailout funds from the government.

Workers voted overwhelmingly for action, with a 94 percent vote to strike on a 51.7 percent turnout, but the unions worked to suppress action. Tube drivers in ASLEF had returned a 99 percent strike vote against the same attack on pay, conditions and pensions.

Rather than calling for united strike action, the RMT now say only that they are “coordinating a campaign of resistance with colleagues from other unions impacted by this threat.”

The Acas negotiations revealed, in the words of the RMT, that nothing is off the table in terms of the threat to jobs, pensions, conditions and safety.”

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said the LU financial crisis had been “deliberately engineered... to drive a cuts’ agenda,” and this was confirmed at the Acas negotiations. Nonetheless, he continued to pledge that the union “remains available for talks aimed at resolving the dispute.”

UK High Court attack on picketing continues at London’s Great Ormond Street Hospital

A high court injunction on picketing by security guards striking at London’s Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) has been modified, though the right to picket is still severely curtailed.

Following the original injunction served on February 10, picketing was suspended. The United Voices of the World (UVW) and its members were threatened with imprisonment, fines and/or the seizure of their assets if they continued to peacefully picket outside the hospital.

The modified injunction orders United Voices of the World (UVW) union members and the UVW leader, Petros Elia, not to picket within 50 metres of the hospital trust property and only within zones specified by the trust.

The guards at GOSH are carrying out a 44-day stoppage to demand full sick pay, maternity pay, holiday pay and other benefits which in-house National Health Service workers receive.

Protest march by striking refuse collection drivers against scabbing Coventry Labour Council, England

Around 70 UK striking refuse collection lorry drivers working for Labour-run Coventry City council held a protest march on Tuesday.

The Unite union members, on all-out pay strike since January 31, marched to the local authority headquarters the Council House. They were highlighting the non-attendance of any elected councillors at the 25 hours of negotiations that took place between Unite and council officials.

The drivers voted by a 98.5 percent majority to strike. 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.

In response to the strike, Coventry council hired a replacement scab workforce mobilised through its wholly owned arms-length company, Tom White Waste. It set up 11 sites across the city where waste can be dropped off. The sites are guarded by privately hired security staff.

Further strike by train conductors at TransPennine Express in England over pay

Train conductors at TransPennine Express (TPE), which runs services in the north of England, held the second of four 24-hour strikes on Sunday. Further strikes are scheduled for the next two Sundays.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members are calling for an end to the pay gap between them and other TPE workers. The dispute also concerns a new agreement covering rest days and Sunday working. The agreement covers the use of new technology for payment. The TPE conductors are calling for a 2p payment per transaction for checking tickets via new technology, in line with conductors working for Northern Trains who get this payment.

The train conductors voted by an 85 percent majority to strike.

Churchill Group rail cleaners UK hold 24-hour walkout and protest outside parliament

UK rail cleaners employed by the Churchill Group held a 24-hour stoppage Wednesday and a protest rally outside the UK parliament. They are calling for improved pay and conditions.

The hundreds of RMT members work for Churchill to clean trains and stations on behalf of Govia Thameslink Railway, HS1, Southeastern Railway and Eurostar in the southeast of England. They are demanding £15 an hour, along with sick pay and travel benefits currently denied to outsourced workers.

Around 1,000 outsourced cleaners were balloted by the RMT, returning a clear call for action—two of the ballots registering a 100 percent strike vote. The cleaners are paid just £8.91 per hour, far less than in-house cleaners who perform the same role. Churchill refused to lift wages, despite profits of £11.1 million last year and dividends of £12 million to its parent company and £3.8 million to company directors.

The RMT opposes joint action between outsourced cleaners and in-house workers, and participates in the Rail Industry Recovery Group, which plans £2 billion cuts a year at the expense of jobs and conditions.

RMT union calls off planned 24-hour strike by train staff at UK Cross Country rail company after legal challenge

A strike by train managers and senior conductors at UK rail franchise Cross Country, due to take place Saturday, was called off by the RMT. The union cancelled the walkout after an undisclosed legal challenge by the employer.

The RMT union members who had walked out over the Christmas/New Year period, had voted overwhelmingly to walk out. They oppose company plans to draft in other staff grades to replace train manager and senior conductor roles. Train managers and senior conductors carry out safety-critical roles which would be threatened by their replacement.

Cross Country runs long-distance routes serving the English Midlands, southwest England, parts of Wales and Scotland's major cities.

For the past five years, the RMT and the ASLEF drivers' union isolated and dissipated struggles by thousands of guards and drivers at private rail franchises throughout the UK against driver only operated trains (DOO)—threatening jobs and passenger safety as drivers take over the operation of train doors.

Pay strike by pallet production workers in Greater Manchester, England continues as union enters pay talks with Chep

The strike by around 70 UK workers at Chep in Trafford Park, Greater Manchester, continues. However, the union and the company began pay talks on February 16. The indefinite strike began on December 17, after workers rejected a pay offer of one percent.

The Unite union members, who make pallets for companies like Heinz and Heineken, are paid less than workers at other Chep sites, who earn £1,000 more than those at Trafford Park. They voted 75 percent to strike against a two percent offer. Chep recorded profits of £150 million last year.

The Chep workers reballoted to continue the strike, with 94 percent in favour.

Strike by scaffolders at British Steel plant in Scunthorpe over pay continues

Scaffolders employed by Actavo at the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe are continuing their strike, begun January 26, for higher pay. They have clocked up more than 100 days of stoppages.

Around 60 Unite union members took 12 weeks of strikes at the end of last year and voted by an 83 percent majority to continue the stoppages in 2022. They 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.

A rally in support of the striking workers was scheduled on Tuesday at the steel works entrance.

Further strike by teachers at UK chain of independent schools over attack on pensions

Around 1,500 teachers working for the Girls Day School Trust (GDST), the largest network of independent (i.e., private) girls' schools in the UK, walked out on Wednesday and Thursday, following a one-day strike February 10. The GDST runs 23 independent schools across England and Wales.

The National Education Union (NEU) members are protesting plans by the trust to withdraw from the Teachers' Pensions Scheme (TPS). This would cut the annual amount of pension payments they receive on retirement by a massive 20 percent on average. Teachers were threatened with "fire and rehire" if they do not accept an inferior pension scheme.

The trust's schools in Brighton, Cardiff, London, Newcastle, Northampton, Norwich, Oxford, Portsmouth, Sheffield and Shrewsbury were among those taking part.

The strike ballot returned 95 percent in favour of action, on an 85 percent turnout. The strikes are the first in the GDST's 149-year history. A three-day stoppage is scheduled to take place from March 1.

The GDST made a revised offer under which teachers would be able to remain in the TPS until September 2023 together with a pay rise, but this was rejected.

Teachers at Forest School, London, strike over pension attack

Around 100 teachers at the independent Forest School, a day school in London, walked out on Wednesday with a further five strike days planned.

The NASUWT union members are opposed to plans by the school to leave the TPS and impose an inferior pension scheme.

Strike of workers at steam turbine manufacturer in Rugby, UK over conditions

Around 75 UK workers at GE Steam Power, electric turbine manufacturer and repairer, were on strike February 17 and again on Monday.

The Unite union members are scheduled to hold a further 10 days of stoppages up to May 2. Their employer refuses to negotiate pay rates for flexible working, and workers are expected to adopt new roles for no extra pay.

Bus drivers in Swindon, UK vote to strike over pay

Around 80 UK bus drivers at Stagecoach West based in Swindon voted by 98 percent to strike over low pay. They are currently paid £12 an hour.

They joined drivers at six other Stagecoach West depots, including Bristol, Cheltenham and Gloucester, bringing the number of drivers who voted to walk out up to 380. The Unite union members seek a pay rise. The company offered a one-off £400 cash payment.

It has now been announced that the strikes will begin March 10, running until April 9. The Unite union has refused to put a central pay demand in the pay disputes at Stagecoach and other companies across the UK since autumn of 2021. The union bureaucracy isolated these disputes from each other by not calling for national action, which would have a powerful impact, bringing the whole company's operation to a halt.

Refuse collectors plan stoppage in Barrow, UK over pay

Around 20 UK refuse collectors working for FCC Environment in Barrow plan three-day walkouts from March 9 and March 16 for a pay rise.

The GMB is calling for a below-inflation three percent pay rise. The workers cover 33,000 households in Barrow.

Teachers in Northern Ireland ready to fight over pay

Teachers in Northern Ireland surveyed by their union NASUWT rejected the recent employer's pay offer for 2021/22 and 2022/23 by a near 90 percent majority. They also voted by 70 percent majority to be prepared to strike for an improved offer.

The same offer was rejected by NEU members by a 71 percent majority, with the same percentage being prepared to strike.

Responding to the surveys NASUWT commented, "The anger in the profession has to be recognised and an improved pay offer must be brought forward to avoid an escalation to industrial action over pay."

The NEU stated, "we will conduct a deeper 'listening' exercise in respect of next steps and the potential options open to us."

UK Post Office staff to ballot for strike action in opposition to pay freeze

UK workers employed in post offices as counter staff, in administration and in supply chain posts are to ballot in opposition to an imposed pay freeze.

The Communication Workers Union members will ballot from March 7 to 28.

Refuse collectors in Sussex, England to strike over pay

Around 60 UK refuse collectors, street cleaners and recycling workers in Adur and Worthing in Sussex, England voted by a 100 percent majority on a 90 percent turnout to strike for improved pay.

The GMB union members will begin 14 days of stoppages on March 14. As well as a pay increase, they are seeking an increase in overtime rates and a review of operating practices.

Unanimous strike vote by tugboat crews at Teesport, UK over pay

Tugboat crew working for Svitzer Marine at Teesport, England will hold a 48-hour strike from March 1, followed by 24-hour strikes on March 9 and 26.

The Unite union members voted 100 percent for the stoppages. They oppose a pay freeze enforced by the company. Svitzer is part of shipping giant Maersk, which is forecast to announce profits of nearly £12 billion for 2021.

Tugboat crews are responsible for docking and guiding the giant container ships that use the port. Any strike would have a big impact on the movement of goods in and out of the port.

Domestic and cleaning staff at two hospitals in England to strike over outsourcing

UK domestic and cleaning staff at Blackburn Royal Infirmary and Blackpool Harbour hospital voted by nearly 99 percent to strike in protest at being outsourced to services provider OCS. The Unison members plan to walk out in March.

Airline food delivery workers at Heathrow airport, London to strike over pay

HGV drivers working for aviation catering firm DO & CO will walk out on March 4 and 5 over pay and conditions, after a 94 percent vote in favour.

The Unite union members are responsible for delivering food mainly to British Airways for pilots and cabin crew. The delivery of food to flight crew is part of their contract, so the stoppage could lead to flight cancellations.

Bakery workers in Nottingham, UK ballot over pay offer

Around 150 UK workers employed by Riverside Bakery in Nottingham are balloting for strike action. The ballot closes March 8.

The Unite union members were offered a pay rise by the employer predicated on lower premium and overtime rates. This would leave the workers earning just above the minimum wage.

The bakery makes quiches and savoury flans for supermarket chains including ASDA, Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and Tesco.

Oil refinery workers at Fawley, UK ballot over derisory pay offer

Around 100 workers at the US-owned ExxonMobil oil refinery at Fawley, England are balloting for strike action.

The Unite union members representing around a third of the workforce at the site are employed by three contractors, Altrad Services, Trant Engineering Limited and Veolia Services. The workers rejected a 2.5 percent pay offer over two years. A Unite press release announcing the ballot calls for a one-year deal in line with the rise in inflation. It states any walkouts would take place in April.

Rail equipment workers at Birkenhead, UK possible strike ballot in response to "fire and rehire" threats

Around 130 workers employed by US-owned Wabtec at their Birkenhead depot in England may ballot over threat to impose inferior pay and conditions.

The Unite union members were meeting Wednesday to discuss the company's threat to cut rest breaks and washing time through a "fire and rehire" exercise in June.

Wabtec provides equipment and systems service for rail freight operations.

School support staff in Medway, UK ballot over annual leave compensation

School support staff working for Medway council in Kent are balloting over an offer which miscalculated annual leave pay.

The ballot of GMB members will close on March 5. GMB describes the offer as inadequate, as it does not measure up to that paid to support staff in surrounding authorities. A protest was planned for Thursday to coincide with a full meeting of Medway councillors.

The GMB is not proposing industrial action if the offer is rejected, but an Employment Tribunal sex discrimination claim, as the workforce is mainly women.

Hospital staff at south London hospital to ballot for strike over pay

Following a consultative ballot of porters and cleaners working for outsourcing company G4S, the workers will now ballot for strike action.

The GMB members are seeking a pay rise and provision of sick pay. The ballot opens March 14.

University staff at Staffordshire University, UK ballot over proposals to introduce two-tier workforce

Academic staff at Staffordshire University are balloting to oppose the university's plans for newly appointed staff to be employed by a wholly owned subsidiary company on different contractual terms.

The ballot of University and College Union (UCU) members closes on March 11. Newly appointed staff will not be eligible for the defined benefit Teachers' Pension Scheme but would instead be eligible for the inferior defined contribution Staffordshire University Pension Scheme.

The staff fear the introduction of a two-tier system would be the prelude to an attack on the pay and conditions of all staff.

Asda UK supermarket workers reject pay offer and indicate willingness to strike

Around 8,000 workers at UK supermarket chain Asda rejected a below-inflation pay offer.

The GMB members employed as warehouse, clerical and LGV drivers voted by 70 percent to reject the offer. They also indicated by an 80 percent majority their willingness to take strike action to win an improved

offer.

UK staff at Sheffield college ballot for strike over pay

UK staff at the University of Sheffield International College (USIC) are balloting for strike action over a pay freeze.

The UCU members voted by a 79 percent majority in a consultative ballot to ballot for industrial action. USIC provides preparation courses for international students planning to attend Sheffield University.

USIC refused to offer any pay increase for 2021. The UCU is asking for a 4 percent rise (below the 7.8 percent rate of inflation) and five additional leave days. The ballot closes March 4.

Strike by workers over pay at Somers Forge defence supplier in England wound up by GMB union

A series of strikes by GMB members at Somers Forge, Halesowen in England begun December 17 was wound up after a four percent pay offer was accepted. The offer was put previously, but Somers refused to backdate it to the anniversary date of June 2021.

Somers Forge supplies metal components for the Ministry of Defence.

Union suspends strike by UK Atos IT services staff

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) suspended a strike due to take place February 28. The strike was planned for staff working for French-owned Atos IT Services, which provides services for the National Savings and Investment, Personal Independence Payments (PiP), BBC and Tax-Free Child-Care contracts in the UK.

The workers rejected a 1.5 percent pay offer from Atos. They were demanding a 5 percent pay rise, or a £1,300 increase, whichever was largest, plus a one-off £600 payment in recognition for working throughout the pandemic.

The strike was suspended after a new offer from Atos, for a four percent rise for 2021, and two percent for 2022. It is being put to the PCS membership with the ballot closing Friday.

Middle East

Two-day strike by Tunisian civil servants

Thousands of Tunisian civil servants began a two-day strike on Monday. Around 37,000 held a protest march through the capital city of Tunis.

They are demanding an increase in financial allowances, and that the Tunisian government drafts laws to recruit civil servants on written contracts. They accuse the government of renegeing on previous promises to increase financial allowances.

Open-ended strike of teachers in Syrian Idlib province

Syrian teachers under the Idlib Education Directorate have been on open-ended strike since February 5.

After working for years as volunteers, the 6,000 teachers are demanding to be paid salaries. On February 13, some teachers and their supporters held a protest with slogans reading “Dignity Strike.”

Protests by Iranian teachers over pay and pensions

Protests by teachers took place in around 100 cities across Iran on Saturday, with 15 arrested in the city of Karaj.

They were protesting at the slow implementation of pay and pensions reforms previously promised. Large demonstrations were reported in the cities of Ahwaz, Isfahan, Shahrkard and Yazad and others. Teachers along with other workers are hit by inflation running at 40 percent, exacerbated by US sanctions. They called for teachers arrested in previous demonstrations to be released.

Protest outside Egyptian factory after worker commits suicide over wage arrears

Workers at the Universal Group electrical appliance factory in the Egyptian city of Giza protested outside the factory gates on Tuesday. Fellow worker Asem Afifi committed suicide by throwing himself in front of a car. He was in despair after running up debts because his salary from the factory had not been paid for months. The protest was broken up by security staff using tear gas.

Around 2,500 workers at the factory walked out last September, after not being paid for three months. The Egyptian Centre for Trade Unions and Workers Services reports that around a third of the more than 8,000 violations of workers’ rights in the last year were due to wage arrears.

Africa

Clover food workers’ strike to defend jobs and pay continues in South Africa

Approximately 5,000 workers at the Clover food and beverage group in South Africa are continuing their strike, begun November 22.

One striker told IOL NEWS, “We have not been paid since October. There is no food. A lot of us have been ejected from our rental houses. Life is really tough, but we have to stand together to see this through.” Workers have also faced violence at the hands of management thugs.

Clover plans to close several of its factories, make around 1,400 workers redundant and introduce 12-hour days, worked over four days in every six, without overtime pay. They also propose a 20 percent reduction in wages.

The company agreed to reinstate 763 workers retrenched in November, but the General Industrial Workers Union of South Africa and the Food and Allied Workers Union refused to accept the proposed terms. Clover management offered to reinstate the 763 with full pay for a further eight

months, while the unions demand that workers should return on full pay for the two-year term covered by the negotiations.

Mass demonstration in Cape Town, South Africa ahead of national budget speech

South African workers demonstrated in Cape Town ahead of the ANC government’s national budget speech. The demonstration was organised by the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU).

Among the demands was a basic income grant of R1,500 for the unemployed and lowest paid, increased spending, raised taxes on the wealthiest, nationalisation of major banks, farms and mines, and the introduction of a job guarantee scheme for the country’s 12.5 million unemployed workers.

The action was organised to permit workers to let off steam. The demonstration was protected even for workers who are not in unions. Workers are willing to fight, such as Clover workers and 31,000 gold miners at Sibanye-Stillwater who intend to strike after seven months of ongoing wage negotiations. None of the union federations, however, intend to unify workers’ struggles.

In 2019, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) sold out a five-month stoppage at Sibanye-Stillwater. It accepted a wage agreement, already signed off by the National Union of Mineworkers and Solidarity, which it previously called a “slave labour deal.”

South African union calls off university workers strike in Pretoria

Hundreds of auxiliary workers, including cleaners, security guards, gardeners and food service staff, at the University of Pretoria, South Africa returned to work Monday after nearly two weeks of strikes over pay and working conditions.

The Academic and Professional Staff Association of South Africa (APSA) members, in-sourced since 2016, were demanding a ten percent wage increase, a one-off R3,000 payment, a thirteenth cheque, maternity and paternity leave backdated to 2019, and other benefits.

APSA say they suspended the strike after resolving the issues in negotiations with management but, according to the university, workers’ demands are still subject to further investigation, and nothing will be finalised for six months.

South African security guards and cleaners at Johannesburg hospital protest dismissals

Over 40 South African outsourced security and cleaning staff at Edenvale Hospital, Johannesburg have camped outside the hospital for the last three weeks to protest treatment from Jackcliffy Trading. Their employers are not at their registered offices or contactable by phone.

The South African Cleaners, Security and Allied Workers’ Union (SACSAWU) members say they have been unfairly dismissed, many after seven years’ service, and are still owed three months’ pay.

Pupils lock out teachers in support of unpaid security guards at school in Pretoria, South Africa

Pupils at a Special Educational Needs school in Pretoria, South Africa locked out teachers in protest over a lack of safety due to security staff not being paid and demand the education department intervene.

The security guards, affiliated to SACSAWU, demonstrated last week and some were suspended. The security company says they have not been paid by the education department.

Nigerian port workers strike at two ports over work conditions

Port workers walked out on February 17 at the Ports & Terminal Multipurpose Limited (PTML) and Tin-Can Island ports in Lagos, Nigeria. Four ships expected to unload at the ports in the next few days are expected to face delays, causing congestion.

Freight forwarders at Tin-Can Island and PTML gave the port authorities 72 hours to address technical problems with a newly introduced e-invoicing system for all imports and exports. They threatened industrial action if the authorities failed to address the problems. Unless their demands are met, the workers say they will expand their strike to cover all the Lagos state ports.

Doctors in Plateau state, Nigeria strike in opposition to salary deductions

Resident doctors at the Plateau State Specialists Hospital in Jos, Nigeria began strike action on February 21.

The Association of Resident Doctors members are angry that, in addition to having their salaries cut to 80 percent of the levels in the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (with the claim that it would be temporary), further cuts were made to their salaries, some of which the state government says were mistakes, but that were not corrected.

Ghana Meteorological Agency staff in national strike against poor conditions

Staff of the Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) throughout the country began strike action on February 18. They said the government ignored their complaints on issues raised since 2013.

In 2016 staff at GMet walked out on strike to demand amendment of GMET Act 682 of 2004.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact