

Strikes by Palestinian teachers on the West Bank over pay and education funding; teachers and petrochemical workers walk out in Iran over pay and conditions; general strike in Algeria over rise in cost of living; striking miners at Sibanye-Stillwater gold mines South African reject latest pay offer; workers protest militarism and low pay in Italy in one-day national strike

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute <http://www.wsws.org/wsws/dd-formmailer/dd-formmailer.php> to this regular feature.

Middle East

Palestinian teachers denounce union deal and continue strike over pay and conditions

Thousands of teachers in the Palestinian West Bank walked out in what is described as the largest ongoing mass strike since 2016.

Teachers took part in a three-week strike, called by the West Bank Teachers' Movement (GUPT), to protest the rising cost of living, inadequate child and spouse allowances and wage arrears. GUPT became nervous at the increasing level of support the strike was achieving, and on April 14 suspended the action and signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education.

Rejecting the deal reached by GUPT, which is linked to the PLO and the West Bank government, teachers resumed the stoppage, this time led by the United Teachers' Movement 2022. They say the agreement reached by GUPT was for a 10 percent pay rise in January 2023 followed by a five percent rise in 2024. It did not address the demand put forward in the original strike for the restoration of a "life expense" rise which was suspended in 2013.

Other demands include an improvement in retirement provision, for thousands of teachers on temporary contracts to be given permanent jobs and increases in the spouse and child allowances.

A United Teachers' Movement member told *Quds Press* "This [agreement]... reveals the complicity of the teachers' union with the government, specifically the Ministry of Education, and its compliance with its threats at the expense of teachers' basic rights. It also reveals that the union's recent strike ... was just an act."

Strike of Palestinian medical staff to keep charitable hospital open

A strike of medical staff at the al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital ended on Tuesday. They walked out over delayed funding to the hospital in East Jerusalem and wage arrears. On Monday evening, the Palestinian Authority agreed to provide financing to keep the hospital open.

Further protests by Iranian teachers over pay and education funding

Thousands of Iranian teachers took part in protests in around 50 cities across the country on April 21. Their demands included improved pay and financing for education. Text messages sent to teachers in dozens of cities by security authorities warning them against taking part in the protests only served to swell the number of teachers taking part in the protests.

Strikes by Iranian petrochemical workers over pay and conditions

Strikes took place across several petrochemical sites in Iran on Monday, including the Bushehr petrochemical complex. It followed recent similar strikes in recent days, including in Asaluyeh. Workers' demands include job security for contract workers and payment of earlier promised pay rises. They were also protesting poor living conditions at on-site accommodation and poor food.

Strike of Egyptian gig economy workers

In early April, some of the 12,000 workers employed by food courier company Talabat held a two-day strike to demand higher wages.

Although only a small proportion of the workforce took part, it highlights the growing dependence of Egyptian workers on the precarious gig economy. A recent *Kuwaiti Times* article stated that in the Egyptian capital of Cairo a million orders a day were delivered across the city by couriers.

It explained, “In Egypt, where 60 percent of the 103-million-strong population are under 30 and 14.5 percent of university graduates are unemployed, digital labour platforms have attracted 100,000-200,000 workers. Uber alone employed 90,000 drivers in 2019, all without contracts, insurance or social security.”

Europe

National one-day strike in Italy against militarism and for pay rises

On April 22, workers across all sectors in Italy, including transport and schools, joined a one-day strike called by the Syndical Rank-and-File Union (USB). About 5,000 joined a rally in Rome, where USB members marched with a banner declaring, “Lower your weapons, raise wages.”

One-day national warning strike over pay in Belgium

Belgian trade unions held a one-day national strike on April 22, asking for pay rises to meet the cost of living. According to *RTL*, rallies with thousands of participants took place across the country, as well as multiple stoppages in public transport, crèches, waste collection and other sectors.

The *Brussels Times* reported that the unions called for “open negotiations” on the country’s “wage norms” law, which restricts the pay rises workers are allowed to receive, supposedly to protect the competitiveness of Belgian industry.

The latest update to this law capped possible wage increases to 0.4 percent, while inflation is currently 8.3 percent. When the 0.4 percent figure was announced, which constituted a major attack on workers’ living standards, the unions called limited one-day strikes, as they have again during the current surge in living costs, calling the next such one-day protest on June 20.

Finnish Paperworkers’ Union accepts deal to end four-month strike at UPM

Last week, the Paperworkers’ Union in Finland approved a deal proposed by the National Mediator to end the indefinite strike of around 3,000 workers begun on January 1 at the UPM paper and logging company.

The UPM announced its plan to cancel its company-wide collective agreement and sign five different agreements in its different operations. The IndustriALL federation, to which the Paperworkers’ Union is affiliated, wrote “pulp and paper workers across the world stand united in their condemnation of this unfortunate tactic,” but the company has now achieved exactly this. Working hours were also increased, although according to the Finnish Broadcasting Company the threat to increase them without extra pay was not carried out.

Reuters reported that while the strike cost UPM around 220 million euros, its chief executive said that with the new separate agreements in place, “We will make that back many times in the coming years and decades.”

Wildcat strike of ground handling crew at Dutch airline KLM over threats to jobs

Around 150 ground handling workers at the Dutch airline KLM walked out in a wildcat strike on Saturday, opposing outsourcing plans which may threaten job losses.

According to the *Algemeen Dagblad*, KLM responded to complaints about workload by suggesting that it might outsource some of the work at Schiphol airport to an external company. This would endanger the jobs of the 20 percent of the workforce who work only during the main holiday season. The strike is estimated to have cost KLM several million euros.

De Telegraaf reported that KLM’s operations director visited striking workers on Saturday but made no commitments, and the strike ended on Saturday around noon when the gendarmes, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, made “an urgent request to resume work.”

KLM received 1.8 billion euros from the government towards its wage bill during the pandemic. As a condition of receiving a loan of 3.4 billion euros, the company cut wages by 20 percent and committed to not increasing them again, while the government is now suggesting an extra 400 million euros will need to be cut from the airline’s budget. Ground handling workers at KLM are also not covered by the collective agreement recently agreed by the rest of the sector.

Warning strikes in German daycare centres

This week, workers in daycare centres across several German states have joined one-day warning strikes ahead of upcoming collective bargaining negotiations.

The United Services Union (Verdi) called for 1,500 workers in the state of Saarland and certain cities in Rhineland-Palatinate to walk out on Tuesday, with multiple other cities joining on Thursday, and a strike in the state capital Mainz on Friday, according to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Around 3,000 bus drivers in private companies in Rhineland-Palatinate are also on strike during collective bargaining, in which Verdi is calling for a 7 percent pay rise, and will join childcare workers for a joint rally in Mainz on Friday. Verdi announced further protests and warning strikes next week in daycare centres and other social services throughout the country.

Job losses approved by Spanish trade unions in Douglas shops

Following a total of four days of stoppages in branches of the perfume retailer Douglas called by the Workers’ Commissions and General Workers’ Union, the unions signed an agreement this week approving hundreds of job losses.

The company initially sought to fire 1,000 workers, close 136 branches and push through major changes to working conditions for remaining staff. According to *Europa Press* the deal, approved in a vote of members,

involves around 900 job losses with severance pay, the closure of 124 shops, and allows the changes to working conditions with a compensation payment.

Spain's trade unions last year approved mass job losses with similar minor modifications to companies' initial plans, allowing 350 layoffs at clothing retailer H&M, and isolated numerous strikes of workers in bank branches throughout Spain, agreeing to over 12,000 job cuts at four banks.

Workers at Spanish embassy and consulates in the UK end indefinite pay strike

On Thursday, the UK-based branch of the Foreign Labour Personnel (PLEX) union, representing around 100 workers in the Embassy of Spain in London and consulates general in Manchester and Edinburgh, announced that it was calling off an indefinite strike after 46 days as a "gesture of trust."

This followed a government promise to look at their demands. A campaign of daily one-hour stoppages was to "make the rest of the claims visible," according to *Europa Press*.

The strike began on March 14 with the demand for a 27.5 percent pay rise, pay equality—many workers who have been in the embassy or consulates for years currently earn less than new starters—and inclusion in the Spanish social security system rather than the UK one.

After the government made a pay offer of between 8 and 10 percent, PLEX criticised the larger trade unions for praising it, saying they acted "without consulting the workers." Nevertheless, PLEX reduced its own pay demand to 15-20 percent, *Europa Press* reported. Embassy staff have not received a pay rise since 2008, while inflation in the UK over that period increased prices by 30 percent.

French CGT union ends foundry workers' occupation

On Monday, former workers of the Aveyronnaise Metallurgy Company (SAM) left the factory site in Aveyron, having voted for a deal reached by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) the previous week, *Le Figaro* reported.

Workers had occupied the factory since the liquidation of SAM on November 26 with the loss of 350 jobs, refusing to allow the removal of machinery and demanding that takeover bids be allowed. Around half the former SAM workers joined the occupation, and 282 also took legal action against Renault, the foundry's only customer, demanding compensation.

The CGT proposed to end the occupation after reaching an agreement with the local government which, according to *Le Figaro*, allows the MH Industries group to "consider a possible takeover" of the Aveyron foundry.

Fired workers at Turkish EnerjiSA continue protests

Workers fired by the Turkish energy company EnerjiSA continue their protests to demand reinstatement this week, marching from Ankara to Istanbul and holding several rallies along the way, according to *Evrensel*.

Protests took place for around five weeks, since around 20 Enerji-Sen

union members were told there were no longer suitable positions and dismissed. When the former EnerjiSA workers protested outside the company headquarters to demand an explanation, they were detained by the police. One speaker at a rally said they were dismissed because they left the company union and began to oppose bullying, pressure and unsafe practices in the workplace.

Local government workers in Northern Ireland hold strikes over pay offer

Following a week-long stoppage in March, local government staff at all 11 Northern Ireland (NI) local authorities, Education Authority, NI Housing Executive and staff at several colleges began further stoppages.

Housing Executive and council workers who walked out on Monday plan to stay out until May 1, and will also walk out May 3 to 8. Education Authority workers walked out Tuesday and will stay out until May 1, and then will be out from May 3 to 8.

The Unite union members rejected a 1.75 percent pay rise, following an 11-year pay freeze, with RPI inflation at 9 percent. The workers at the different authorities and bodies voted by big majorities, in most cases by more than 90 percent for the action.

UK drivers employed by scab-organising Coventry Labour council continue pay strike as council denies sacking rumours

The all-out strike by 70 UK refuse collection lorry drivers against Labour Party-run Coventry City Council begun January 31 is continuing. The Unite union called on the council to deny rumours it was preparing to issue 90-day dismissal notices to the striking drivers.

The workers recently voted by a 94 percent margin to continue their stoppage, which will coincide with the May local elections. They re-balloted as the mandate for the current action ran out March 24.

The Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers' pay starts at just £22,183 a year. It takes 11 years' 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.

The council suspended shop steward, Peter Randle, on what Unite said were bogus charges. The union lodged a claim with an employment tribunal accusing the council of victimisation.

Coventry council hired a replacement scab workforce via its wholly owned arms-length company, Tom White Waste. It was recently reported that the HGV drivers working for Tom White Waste were awarded a 12 percent pay rise. The company has sites guarded by privately hired security staff across the city where waste can be dropped off.

A march in support of the striking drivers is planned for May 3.

Chep pallet production workers in Greater Manchester, England end 21-week pay dispute after union negotiates deal

On Wednesday, Chep pallet manufacturing workers in Greater Manchester, England voted to end their 21-week-long strike over pay and accepted a new offer. The strike was the longest running in the Unite union's history.

Unite claims that under the deal the 70 workers will get a 9 percent rise, worth on average £2,500. They will also get a £1,000 lump sum and three extra days leave this year.

Unite announced an “inflation-beating 14 percent pay victory”, claiming the lump sum and additional leave means the deal is worth 14 percent. According to Unite, however, the lump sum and extra leave is for this year alone and not consolidated. Workers received below inflation one and 2 percent deals for each year of the last two years. The new deal therefore only just matches the RPI inflation rate of 9 percent, which may rise, and is not a real terms pay increase.

But according to the company, the 9 percent is to cover two years. The *Manchester Evening News* reported a Chep spokesman who said the agreement is a “two-year pay offer” and “the numbers quoted by the union are an interpretation of our offer.”

Pay parity, one of the original demands of the strikers, was not resolved.

Chep, part of the Brambles supply chain company headquartered in Australia and which operates in 60 countries, recorded profits of £150 million last year. Pallet workers play a crucial part in global supply chains. Chep workers wanted to visit other sites for solidarity action, but Unite ensured the dispute remained isolated and opposed spreading the strike, both in the UK and globally.

Street cleaners and refuse collectors in Rugby, UK begin two-week strike over pay

Refuse HGV lorry drivers, loaders and street cleaning staff in Rugby working for Conservative-controlled Rugby council in England began a two-week strike on Tuesday over pay.

The Unite union members are low paid. Street cleaners begin at £17,100 a year, rising to £19,200 after five years, while loaders begin at £19,200, rising to £21,300 after five years. HGV drivers start at £21,300, and reach only £23,400 after five years.

An ITV News website article of April 26 reported some of the workers must resort to food banks to get by. The same article noted the council would not pay above the nationally agreed 1.75 percent rise. However, it also stated Unite and the council were taking part in a pay evaluation to report in May.

Workers at Hackney council in London strike over pay offer

Around 200 workers employed by Hackney Council in east London walked out Monday to Wednesday this week, with a planned stoppage due May 3-5.

The Unite union members work in refuse collection, building services and transport for special needs and the disabled. They oppose the nationally set Local Government Association pay rise offer of 1.5 percent, and up to 2.75 percent for those on the lowest pay grades. The offer is a cut in real terms on top of 11 years of pay freezes, which leaves council workers around 22 percent worse off in spending power. The workers are demanding as a minimum a 10 percent rise.

Strikes by workers at steam turbine manufacturer in Rugby, UK over pay and conditions continues

A series of strikes by around 75 UK workers at electric turbine manufacturer and repairer GE Steam Power in Rugby is continuing, with the latest one due Friday.

The Unite union members are scheduled to hold stoppages up to May 2, and Unite is to re-ballot workers for further walkouts.

Their employer refuses to negotiate pay rates for flexible working, and workers are expected to adopt new roles for no extra pay. The company is being sold to French energy giant EDF. In preparation for the sale, the company brought in consultancy firm Shape Associates, which according to Unite is being used to force through changes prior to the sale and is disregarding the recognition agreement between Unite and GE Steam.

GE Steam makes steam turbines, including those used in nuclear submarines.

Teachers at London school strike against bullying, poor working conditions and pay

Teachers at Walthamstow Primary Academy in Waltham Forest in the UK capital began a three-day strike Tuesday.

The National Education Union (NEU) members are protesting poor working conditions and bullying by management, and claim they are wrongly underpaid. They held a previous three-day strike in March.

Teachers at London school strike over cancellation of talk by author

Teachers at the John Fisher Catholic state school in Croydon, London were set to walk out on Thursday.

The NEU members are protesting the actions of the Southwark Archdiocese (catholic church area body). The Archdiocese intervened to cancel a planned talk at the school by author, Simon James Green, who writes books for young adults featuring gay characters. The Archdiocese also sacked several school governors who were in favour of inviting the author.

Teachers on Isle of Man begin industrial action short of a strike over pay and working conditions

Around 400 teachers on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea began industrial action short of striking on Wednesday. They are refusing to attend meetings and respond to emails outside teaching sessions. They are also refusing to cover for absent colleagues or submit lesson plans.

The NASUWT members are protesting a two percent pay offer backdated to September. According to the NASUWT, the value in real terms of teachers' pay fell 30 percent since 2010. They also oppose unsustainable workloads. They voted by a 94 percent majority on a 66 percent turnout for the action. They also voted by an 84 percent majority to strike, but to date no stoppages have been scheduled by the union.

Bus workers in Glasgow, Scotland to strike over pay

Around 60 drivers, cleaners and shunters working for the First Glasgow bus company voted by a 96 percent majority to strike over pay.

The Unite union members will hold 48-hour stoppages on May 4 and May 18. They rejected a two-year pay deal which would mean some workers being paid £9.48 an hour backdated from August 2021 to April 2022. As of April, the adult minimum wage is £9.50.

Refuse collectors at Wealden council, England vote to strike over pay

UK refuse collectors employed by waste management company Biffa on behalf of Wealden District Council in Sussex rejected a new pay offer by a 93 percent majority.

A planned two-week stoppage, due to start Monday, was suspended for talks on the offer. The refuse workers collect the domestic waste of around 65,000 Wealden householders.

The GMB union announced a two-week strike will begin on May 2.

Refuse collection workers in Manchester, England to walk out over pay

Around 200 UK refuse collectors working for outsourcing company Biffa on a Manchester City Council contract voted by a 90 percent majority to strike. They rejected a 1.75 percent pay offer from Biffa. Biffa's offer is the same offer made to council workers. It means workers being paid only 64 pence above the hourly minimum wage rate.

The Unite and GMB union members work as drivers, loaders and environmental operatives. They will begin a two-week strike on May 3, followed by a further two-week strike on May 23.

Biffa is responsible for disposal of the domestic waste of a quarter of a million households in Manchester.

UK academics vote for a marking boycott and further strikes in pay dispute

University and College Union (UCU) members working in higher education are to begin a marking boycott and hold further strikes in their pay dispute.

Hundreds of delegates at a recent UCU higher education sector conference voted for the action. Academics at 41 institutions will begin a marking and assessment boycott, while those at 39 institutions will hold a further 10 days of stoppages. A UCU higher education committee will meet on May 12 to decide the dates of the strikes and the marking boycott action.

The UCU members at universities already held strikes over the issues of pay, conditions and pensions this year. Instead of a unified struggle at all universities, the UCU called out different institutions, either over pensions or pay and conditions.

The Universities Superannuation Scheme's joint negotiating committee (JNC) recently imposed massive attacks on pensions, meaning workers in the higher education sector losing tens of thousands of pounds. The JNC—comprising five employers' representatives, five from the UCU and a chair—was set up in 2018, and was presented by the union as a concession from employers to justify their sell-out of the 2018 pensions

dispute.

UCU General Secretary Jo Grady recently announced the next stage in the so-called Four Fights (pay, workload, casualisation and equality) dispute, including surveys, bargaining, indicative ballots culminating in an actual strike ballot—in a year's time, from "April 2023 onwards!"

In a recently published survey of university academics, two thirds of respondents said they were likely to leave the sector over the next five years, citing pension cuts, pay and working conditions.

UK traffic wardens in Wiltshire vote to strike over cuts to unsocial hours pay

Traffic wardens in the English county council of Wiltshire voted by a 100 percent majority on a 92 percent turnout to strike.

The GMB members protested the council's proposals to cut unsocial hours payment by between 10 and 20 percent. The GMB has yet to announce dates for stoppages.

The proposal to cut unsocial hours pay will also affect other Wiltshire council staff, including highway, leisure centre, care and social work staff. The cuts would mean social workers losing around £7,000 a year, while the traffic wardens will lose around £2,000 a year.

Northern Ireland teachers vote to strike over pay, workload and working conditions

Teachers in Northern Ireland have voted by an 81 percent majority to strike in support of improved pay and against excessive workloads and poor working conditions.

The NASUWT members also voted by a 98 percent majority for industrial action short of a strike. Recent surveys of teachers showed 74 percent said their workloads increased significantly in the last two years, while 54 percent were thinking of leaving the profession.

The NASUWT is yet to publicly announce a programme of stoppages but its press release announcing the ballot result stated, "We will now enter a sustained period of industrial action across Northern Ireland's schools."

Scottish local government workers indicate willingness for strike ballot over pay

A Unite union press release Tuesday announced the result of a consultative ballot of its members working for local government authorities in Scotland.

Rejecting the two percent pay rise on offer from the employers' body, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), they voted by a 91 percent majority in favour of balloting for industrial action. The statement noted Unite would ballot its members, but gave no date for it.

Waste management workers at UK oil refinery ballot for stoppages over pay

Workers employed by waste management company Veolia at Stanlow oil refinery in Cheshire are balloting for strike action after rejecting a 3.5 percent pay offer.

The ballot closes May 3, and according to a Unite press release any stoppages could take place in May. Veolia is a French-owned multinational waste management company.

UK refuse workers in Croydon to ballot for industrial action over pay offer

Around 100 refuse workers employed by outsourcing company, Veolia who provide domestic waste removal services to Croydon council in south London, are to be balloted over low pay. They work as drivers, loaders and sweepers.

The ballot will begin on May 3, closing on May 23. According to Unite, the workers are paid around £7,000 a year less than other refuse workers in the London region.

Most HGV drivers are paid just £12.51 an hour, while sweepers and loaders are on £10.75 an hour.

UK domestic appliance repair and fitting engineers to ballot over pay

UK workers employed by domestic appliance company Whirlpool are to ballot over a 2.5 percent pay offer. Whirlpool manufactures and supplies washing machines and other white goods with the brand names of Hotpoint, Indesit and Whirlpool.

The Unite union members, responsible for fitting and repairing the appliances, are based nationwide. The company has depots across the country including in Barnsley, Gateshead, Manchester and Raunds in Northamptonshire.

The US-based multinational reported pre-tax profits of £12 million in 2020, up by 250 percent from the previous year's £4.8 million.

Specialist metal workers at Hereford firm in England in pay ballot

Around 300 workers employed by Special Metals Wiggin in Hereford in England are balloting over pay. The ballot closes May 6.

Special Metals Wiggin manufactures special nickel products for the aerospace, auto and oil and gas industries.

The GMB members rejected a two percent pay offer from the company. Under an agreement between the GMB and the company signed in 2020, if inflation rose in 2022 discussions would take place about a wage rise to be paid in 2023. In the light of rocketing inflation, the company is refusing to renegotiate the agreement and made the two percent offer. In a press release, the GMB stated it "has put forward a substantial interim pay claim."

Unite union postpones strike of auto component warehouse workers in Oxford, England after employer makes new offer

Stoppages by around 180 UK workers employed by logistics firm Rudolph & Hellmann at the Oxford Mini car plant due on April 26, 28, May 4 and 6, were postponed by the Unite union. This is to allow the workforce to vote on an increased offer from the employer.

The warehouse staff and shunter drivers voted to strike after rejecting a pay offer. The company claimed the offer represented a 10 percent rise, but this was disputed by Unite, who said the real figure was six percent.

The Unite press release announcing the strike postponement did not give details of the improved offer but stated that if it is rejected, scheduled stoppages for May 10, 12, 17 and 19 will go ahead.

UK air manufacturing workers accept new pay offer after planned strikes suspended by Unite

Around 3,000 UK workers employed by plane manufacturer Airbus accepted a pay offer of 8.6 percent over 13 months and a backdated 5.1 percent lump sum, plus an extra day's leave in 2023 and 2024.

The Unite union members voted in February to walk out, but planned stoppages were suspended for further pay talks, which resulted in the new accepted pay offer.

Strike of UK Croydon council ground maintenance workers suspended by Unite in response to pay offer

A planned strike by around 20 ground maintenance workers employed by Croydon council in England set for April 25 to 27 was suspended for negotiations by Unite. The workers are responsible for maintaining parklands and games fields.

The workers rejected the 1.75 percent pay offer imposed on all local authority workers. Following a pay freeze over 11 years, the workers are around 22 percent worse off in real terms.

The maintenance workers now work directly for the council, after previously working for a private contractor. They were brought back in-house three years ago, but their terms and conditions were not brought back in line with other directly employed council staff. The negotiations are to address the pay claim and harmonisation of terms and conditions.

Long-running dispute of security staff at UK hospital in Reading ends with accepted pay offer

Twenty UK security staff working for contractor Kingdom Services to provide security at the Royal Berkshire hospital in Reading ended their long-running dispute for improved pay.

The Unite members' campaign for improved pay began in December 2020 with walkouts in support of their claim. They had first balloted for stoppages in February 2020, but held off taking action as the pandemic began.

According to a Unite press release, the settlement backdated to December 2021 represents a 7.5 percent pay rise, which is below inflation. In addition, the security guards will get a £400 lump sum representing back pay for the period until December 2021.

GMB union ends strike of refuse collectors in Sussex, England

After 30 days of stoppages begun in February around 60 UK refuse collectors, street cleaners and recycling workers in Adur and Worthing in Sussex ended their dispute after the council made a new offer. They were fighting for higher pay. The dispute was paused earlier this month.

According to the GMB, under the new deal refuse loaders will get an 8.2 percent rise, cleansing drivers will get a 10.4 percent rise and some HGV drivers will receive a 20.7 percent rise.

The GMB union members voted by a 100 percent majority on a 90 percent turnout to walk out for higher pay.

GMB suspends planned strike at North Somerset Environment Company in England

The GMB union called off strikes of around 100 refuse and recycling workers at the North Somerset Environment Company due to take place April 12, 13 and two-day stoppages April 16-17 and April 21-22.

Talks brokered by the UK government mediation service Acas began on Monday involving the GMB and North Somerset Council. The only current action is an overtime ban, which is to last until April 30.

Workers turned down a 1.75 percent pay offer from the company, which is wholly owned by North Somerset council and serves 88,000 homes. They subsequently turned down “improved” offers.

Referring to the talks which took place Monday, GMB regional organiser Tim Northover, told the *somersetlive.co.uk* news website, “It’s do or die time for these talks now really, this can’t go on forever.” As of Thursday, the outcome of the talks was not known.

Protest by term-time-only low-paid women in Chatham, England

On April 21, a protest took place by term-time-only workers in schools to coincide with a full meeting of the Medway Council, Chatham.

It was the second such protest by the GMB union members who protested a derisory offer to compensate the low-paid women for underpayment of annual leave.

Africa

General strike in Algeria over cost-of-living crisis

A general strike took place on Tuesday and Wednesday in Algeria. It involved 29 public sector unions, including teaching unions. A high turnout was recorded. Those taking part were protesting the rising cost of living, particularly the increasing cost of basic food stuffs such as cooking oil, milk and wheat.

Striking miners at Sibanye-Stillwater gold mines South African stand firm and reject latest pay offer

The strike in South Africa at multinational mining company Sibanye-Stillwater will continue into its third month, as workers hold out for a 9.8 percent pay increase, refusing the company’s revised offer of 7.8 percent, tapering to 6.8 percent in the third year.

While the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) members, numbering 25,000 of the total 31,000 workforce, want a R1000 a month pay rise, the firm has only increased its offer from R700 to R850 a month over the three-year pay period. An additional R50 monthly living out allowance is half the R100 that workers demand.

In 2019, AMCU ended a five-month stoppage at Sibanye-Stillwater, accepting a deal they previously called “slave labour” when it was first agreed by the NUM and Solidarity unions.

South African bus drivers face union sell-out in pay dispute

Up to 14,000 bus drivers across South Africa may strike over pay and conditions if they reject a six percent salary increase agreed by unions with employer bodies, the South African Bus Employers Association and the Commuter Bus Employers Organisation.

The South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (Satawu), the National Union of Metalworkers South Africa and three other unions initially demanded a 10 percent increase but are now presenting the latest offer to their members as a fait accompli, even though the threat of a strike forced the bus companies to increase the rise from 2.5 to 4.5, then 5.3 and now 6 percent.

A Satawu spokesperson said “We have an agreement in principle regarding the revised six percent wage offer. From where we stand, we feel we can sell this offer to our members.”

Health workers in Gqeberha, South Africa protest staff shortages

About 100 protesting health workers have shut down clinics in Motherwell, Gqeberha, South Africa since April 20, demanding the national government put the Eastern Cape provincial health department into administration.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union members, including nurses, other health workers and cleaners, say clinics and health centres are critically understaffed and were better managed by the Nelson Bay Metro municipality before 2012 when they were taken over by the Eastern Cape province.

South African water workers in Limpopo province threaten to strike over pay and conditions

Water workers at the Lepelle Northern Water Board, Limpopo, South Africa marched and demonstrated April 22 outside the board’s offices in the capital, Polokwane. They handed over a memorandum of demands, threatening to strike if these were not met.

The South African Municipal Workers’ Union members say they were awarded a three percent salary increase rather than the previously agreed 6.5 percent. They also complain of poor safety, changes of conditions of service and outsourcing of jobs, accusing the board of maladministration.

Farm workers and local people join forces in protest for better pay and living conditions in major citrus-growing region of South Africa

Over 2,000 farm workers and residents in the citrus-growing region of Sundays River Municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa marched and protested last week in the towns of Kirkwood and Addo to demand pay rises and improvements in local infrastructure.

The South African National Civic Association (SANCO) members demand a raise from R23 to R30 an hour. Local residents joined in protests because they want improved electricity and water supplies, street lighting and a police station. They jointly presented petitions to the municipality and the police force.

Local farm owners, alarmed by the forcefulness of the protests, were granted an interdict from the High Court in Gqeberha, prohibiting demonstrating workers and SANCO leaders from coming near their farms.

Farm workers demonstrate against illegal evictions in Western Cape, South Africa

On April 26, around 100 women farm workers marched to the Paarl Magistrates Court and Drakenstein municipal buildings, Western Cape, South Africa in protest over a surge in farm evictions in the Cape Winelands near Cape Town.

The farm workers, part of the Women on Farms (WFP) group, demand the government implement a moratorium on evictions now that the national State of Disaster, due to the pandemic, has ended. “Thousands of farmers and their families face homelessness or living in overcrowded informal settlements” and “landowners who evict farmer dwellers illegally are very rarely prosecuted or held accountable,” they say.

Mozambican transport operators threaten strike against price rises

Mozambican transport operators are threatening to take their vehicles off the road, with a big impact on the country’s economy, if there are further rises in the price of fuel.

The Mozambican Federation of Road Transport Associations (Fematro) declared on April 22 that the government should solve the fuel price problem. A Fematro spokesperson warned, “If the price of fuel rises again, and the State is unable to help, road transport will have to stop.”

Transport operators are also affected by increases in the price of spare parts to keep vehicles roadworthy.

Senegalese health workers walk out to defend midwives victimised after mother and baby die

Senegalese health workers began strike action on April 21 to protest the attempt to scapegoat six midwives for the tragic deaths of a mother and her baby in hospital. This led to nationwide anger over poor conditions in hospitals, with strikers also demanding more pay.

The National Association of Midwives and other health sector organisations called strike action for between one and three days.

The midwives are charged with failing to help a person in danger after the death of Astou Sokhna at a public hospital in the town of Louga in the north of the country. The woman’s requests for a caesarean section were turned down.

Namibian fishermen fired for demanding shorter hours

Namibian fishermen who demanded a reduction in their working hours—from 18 to 14 hours per day—were suspended from their jobs and charged with four counts of misconduct.

On 15 March, the 22 men were summoned to a disciplinary hearing and charged with disrupting operations, ignoring their conditions of employment and refusing tasks assigned to them. They were asked to leave the premises immediately. They were given five working days to respond to the charges or face permanent dismissal.

Following the hearing, the fishermen received letters stating “the employer has regrettably decided that your services will be terminated as of the date of this notice.”

Rather than mobilising their members to defend the exploited fishermen, Petrus Immanuel of the Metal, Mining, Maritime and Construction union said they would be meeting with the employers the following week.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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