

Metalworkers in Spain continue strikes for new collective agreements; thousands of German steelworkers join warning strikes over pay; construction and transport workers in Thessaloniki, Greece demand protection from Covid-19 after outbreak; protests by workers in Palestinian West Bank against price rises; three-month strike at South African Sibanye-Stillwater gold strike ends with sellout deal

## Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

9 June 2022

*The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.*

### **Metalworkers in Spain continue strikes for new collective agreements**

Two major strikes of metalworkers in Spain continued this week, as unions negotiate new collective agreements with regional employers' associations.

In Cantabria, the unions report that some 95 percent of the 20,000 workers covered by the agreement joined the indefinite strike begun June 2. The unions want a 6.5 percent pay rise for 2021 and one percent above inflation for subsequent years in negotiations with Pymetal.

A meeting on Wednesday at ORECLA, the state mediation body, ended with no agreement, and the unions said in a press release that "each economic proposal made by the bosses is even worse than the previous one, an evident sign that Pymetal has not really come to seek an agreement." Meetings at ORECLA continued on Thursday.

A three-day strike also began on Tuesday in A Coruña, following four one-day strikes in May called by the Galician Union Confederation (CIG) during negotiations over pay and a new collective agreement. The CIG is demanding retrospective pay rises of 0.5 percent for 2020, and 6.5 percent for 2021, while the employers are offering only 3.5 percent for 2021. A further three-day strike is scheduled for June 28.

### **Final day of teachers' strikes over work conditions in Catalonia, Spain**

On Thursday, teachers in Catalonia, Spain, walked out for the last one-day strike called by the unions against changes to working conditions, including cutting teaching time and beginning the school year earlier in September.

The unions say new stoppages may be called in September. According to *el Periódico*, minimum service requirements were imposed to ensure schools would continue to function as daycare centres and limit the economic impact of the strike, keeping between a third and half of staff in primary schools and nurseries on the job.

A thousand people joined a rally in Barcelona on Thursday in support of the strike.

### **Thousands of German steelworkers join warning strikes over pay**

Since June 1, steelworkers throughout northwest and east Germany have joined warning strikes called by the IG Metall union as part of its collective bargaining with employers in the sector. The union reports that 12,400 workers have joined its scattered regional stoppages.

IG Metall has so far rejected the employers' offer of a one-off payment of 2,100 euros, and is asking for a pay rise of 8.2 percent. However, the union's statement, "It is almost absurd to only want to impose a one-off payment in times of high inflation and high profits" is at odds with comments made by its officials, and is a warning the union will call off the strike when the one-off payment is replaced by a face-saving permanent pay increase below the rate of inflation.

IG Metall's head in the southwestern state of Baden-Württemberg said recently, "Exorbitant inflation rates cannot be compensated by collective bargaining policy." This echoes comments by Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the president of the employers' association Gesamtmetall Stefan Wolf calling for the return of the policy from the 1960s and 70s of "Concerted

Action”—collaboration between the government, employers and trade unions to impose the cost of inflation on the working class.

### **Warning strike at German ports over pay**

Dock workers in five major ports across Germany, including around 6,000 workers in the busiest port in Hamburg, held four-hour warning strikes from the start of the late shift Thursday. The strikes were called by the United Services Union (Verdi) during negotiations with the Central Association of German Seaport Companies (ZDS).

Verdi is calling for an increase in hourly wages of 1.20 euros, as well as compensation for inflation, while the ZDS only offered a 3.2 percent pay rise for 2022 and 2.8 percent for next year for the 12,000 workers covered by the collective agreement.

### **National school strike in Italy**

On May 30, teachers throughout Italy joined a one-day strike called by five unions to oppose a new law which increases competition and fails to deal with widespread insecure contracts. One union warned that in Sardinia there was a threat to cut 15,000 jobs.

According to the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions, around 14 percent of teachers in all schools nationwide took part in the strike, and around 36 percent of kindergarten, primary and lower secondary school teachers walked out. The strike was bitterly opposed by the head teachers' association, which defended the entrenchment of temporary employment and low pay, complaining, "More money for everyone has a populist flavour without using the increases to restore efficiency and reward."

### **Airline and air traffic control workers strike in Italy**

Workers at three budget airlines, Ryanair, easyJet and Volotea, held a four-hour strike in Italy on Wednesday, after two unions accused the companies of "failure to comply with the minimum wages provided for by the national contract."

Another issue was "arbitrary reductions of the pay-cheque, the non-payment of sick days, the company's refusal to grant compulsory leave during the summer season and the lack of water and meals for the crew," according to *ADN*.

Air traffic controllers at state-owned ENAV also struck for 12 hours on Wednesday, after three unions complained the collective agreement which expired at the end of 2019 had not been renegotiated.

### **Municipal workers across France strike for improved pay and staffing levels**

This week workers in municipal services in multiple French cities joined strikes and protests to demand improvements in pay and denounce understaffing.

On Tuesday, workers in Lyon held a one-day strike calling for a

1,000-euro bonus and to make the job more attractive, as 500 posts are currently vacant. As a protest, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) set up a hiring stall to collect CVs from passers-by, and sent them to the mayor, *20 Minutes* reported.

Workers in the region of Occitania also walked out on Tuesday, with over a hundred demonstrating in Montpellier to demand the payment of a previously agreed bonus, according to *France Bleu*. The regional government voted in 2017 to approve the payment of a bonus of 300 euros per month to compensate for increased working hours, which was supposed to be paid from 2020. The government cited the war in Ukraine and the pandemic as excuses for renegeing on the commitment.

On Thursday, workers in the municipalities of Nantes and Douarnenez also struck over pay, and a two-day strike begins in Rennes on Friday.

### **Workers at French airports strike over pay**

On Thursday, a quarter of flights at Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport in Roissy near the French capital were cancelled as 300 workers walked out and demonstrated to demand a 300 euro pay rise. They were joined by workers at the smaller Paris-Orly airport and Marignane airport near Marseille, *France Bleu* reported.

The stoppages, mainly of maintenance technicians employed by Aéroports de Paris, were called by seven unions which say that 15,000 jobs were lost in the aviation sector due to the pandemic, leading to an increase in the workload of remaining workers.

The previous day security staff at Roissy also stopped work, causing delays in boarding. Workers at ground handling company AviaPartner began a two-day partial strike on Wednesday at Lyon-St Exupéry airport to demand improvements in pay and working hours. Last week workers at AviaPartner in Brussels airport held a wildcat strike, denouncing the pressure caused by understaffing.

### **Construction and transport workers in Thessaloniki, Greece, demand protection from COVID-19 after outbreak**

On Thursday, construction workers building the new metro system in Thessaloniki, Greece, held a 24-hour strike to demand both a pay rise and "immediate security measures for all staff against Covid-19," *ef.syn* reported. The walkout followed an outbreak of Covid-19 among archaeologists working on the construction site of the Venizelos station, when seven cases were detected on Friday June 3 and five cases the next day. Construction did not stop after the cases were detected, with workers kept on the job after rapid tests.

Bus drivers at the Organisation of Urban Transportation of Thessaloniki (OASTH) also struck on Thursday, in a long-running dispute over the collective agreement. OASTH drivers walked out on Wednesday last week, the first stoppage following a court ruling confirming their strike was legal after courts previously attempted to ban them from striking.

According to *ef.syn*, the union at OASTH criticised a recent announcement that passengers would begin boarding at the front door of buses again, saying that during the pandemic bus drivers "paid a heavy price with 9 dead colleagues."

### **Workers at Ural Compressor Plant in Russia strike over unpaid**

## wages

This week, workers at the Ural Compressor Plant in Yekaterinburg, Russia, began an indefinite strike until they are paid months of wage arrears. According to comments of one worker to *EI*, payments began to be late in January, and partial payments began in May following a strike, but the company still owes 13.4 million roubles to 316 workers.

### Strike continues at Georgian mineral water bottling plant

Workers at the Borjomi mineral water bottling plant in the Georgian town of that name continue their strike this week, begun after 49 workers were fired for refusing to agree to a 50 percent pay cut. Around 400 workers walked out to demand their reinstatement, as well as the reversal of the pay cut.

The government suggested it would acquire some of the shares in Borjomi, making it majority non-Russian owned, which would reduce the impact of the sanctions on current majority shareholder, the Russia-based Alfa Group. Strikers denounced the company for hiring strike-breakers, on three to four times the salary of normal workers, who are being brought from all over Georgia as well as Russia and Ukraine. Workers pelted police cars with eggs as they ferried scabs across the picket line.

### Strike at construction site in Zrenjanin, Serbia

Serbian media said that on Tuesday morning around 30 Chinese migrant workers at a construction site in Zrenjanin, Serbia began a strike after they were not paid six months' wages and were physically assaulted.

*VOICE* released a video showing an altercation between workers and management, when workers asked when they would be paid, as they had only received 50 euros for six months, after which they were reportedly ejected by security.

The company, Linglong, a Chinese manufacturer whose tyre factory is under construction in Zrenjanin, denied there had been a strike on the site, despite footage released by *HI* showing the site was totally empty on Tuesday, and said the workers involved were employed by a contractor.

There have been numerous protests and strikes at the site, with workers telling media they are forced to live on-site in inhumane conditions. One Serbian worker told *Blic* they had threatened to strike because the company did not provide any safe drinking water, while the tap water in Zrenjanin contains unsafe levels of arsenic. The Sloga union previously accused the company of stealing passports and intimidating workers who speak out about conditions.

### UK drivers employed by scab-organising Coventry Labour council vote to extend pay strike

The 70 UK refuse collection lorry drivers on strike against Labour Party-run Coventry City Council voted 100 percent to continue their strike for another 12 weeks.

The Unite union members walked out on January 31. 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 City 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.

### Chicken feed production workers' stoppage in Northern Ireland over pay parity

Workers at Moy Park chicken feed manufacturing plant in Randalstown, Northern Ireland stopped work on Monday. Those taking part included drivers, mill operators and engineers.

The Unite union members, who voted by a 78 percent majority, are seeking pay parity with other Moy Park manufacturing sites in Northern Ireland. The workers rejected an offer by the company to tie pay parity to an attack on terms and conditions, including holiday pay.

The Moy Park group made an operating profit of £86 million last year and paid its highest paid director £0.9 million.

### Further strike by cleaners working for UK train cleaning company over pay and conditions

UK rail cleaners employed by the Churchill Group held a stoppage over the Jubilee bank holiday weekend. The workers, who held strikes in February, March and April, call for improved pay and working conditions.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members work for Churchill cleaning 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 that are currently denied to outsourced workers.

The 1,000 outsourced cleaners were balloted by the RMT, returning a clear call for action—two of the ballots registered a 100 percent strike vote. The cleaners are paid £8.91 per hour, far less than in-house cleaners performing the same role. Churchill refused to raise 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.

### UK Crown Post Offices staff strike over pay

Post office staff employed at the 114 UK state-owned Crown Post Offices across the country struck on June 4 over pay.

The Post Office offered no pay rise for 2021/22, and only 2.5 percent for 2022/23. RPI inflation is at 11.1 percent. On Monday, Post Office workers

in administration and supply chain services took strike action.

The stoppages followed a 24-hour strike by crown office staff, administrative and supply chain staff on May 3.

The members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) voted for strike action in March by a majority of 97 percent.

### **Lecturers strike in four northwest colleges in England over pay**

Several hundred lecturers at four colleges in the northwest of England held a one-day strike on Tuesday, with a further one planned for Friday.

The University and College Union (UCU) put in for a pay increase of a minimum 8.5 percent, against management's offer of two percent. The colleges taking part were Burnley College, City of Liverpool College, Nelson and Colne College Group and Oldham College.

The staff at the four colleges, along with staff at Hopwood Hall College in Greater Manchester, held a one-day strike on May 18. The UCU at Hopwood Hall College called off Tuesday's strike after the college made a below-inflation pay offer of 6.49 percent rising to 7.52 percent for the lowest paid lecturers for 2021/22, which was accepted.

On the eve of the May 18 stoppage, the UCU at Bury College agreed a six percent deal, as opposed to the two percent originally offered by management. UCU President Jo Grady called it an "amazing deal."

A Further Education rally organised by the UCU is planned on Friday in Sackville Gardens, Manchester, followed by a march to St Peter's Square.

### **UK refuse collection workers in Wealden, Sussex continue strike over pay**

UK refuse collection workers employed as drivers, loaders and pickers, by waste management company Biffa contracted by Wealden council are continuing their strike over pay begun April 25. Originally planned as a two-week strike, it is now scheduled to last until June 25.

The GMB union members, seeking an improved pay offer, rejected several offers from Biffa during the strike. Two weeks ago, three GMB officials on the picket line were arrested by police. The workers voted by a more than 90 percent majority for industrial action.

### **Further strike by cleaners over unpaid wages at St George's hospital, London**

Outsourced cleaners employed by Mitie at St George's hospital, Tooting in the UK capital began a 48-hour strike on Monday over pay and conditions. It follows a 24-hour strike last week.

The GMB members, who have worked throughout the pandemic, had their wages withheld for seven weeks while the company restructured pay cycles. They demand compensation for hardship and to be employed directly by the National Health Service.

### **Refuse workers in London to strike over pay**

Around 100 drivers, loaders and sweepers working for French-owned waste management company Veolia in London will begin a three-week strike on June 16 over pay.

The Unite union members are contracted to provide waste management services to Croydon council. The workers in Croydon earn around £7,000 less than workers performing similar roles in neighbouring London boroughs.

The drivers, who hold HGV licences, earn around £12.51 an hour while many of the loaders and sweepers earn just £10.75 an hour. The non-statutory London Living Wage is £11.05 an hour.

### **Rail maintenance workers in Doncaster, England to strike over fire and rehire threat over pay and conditions**

Around 200 UK workers employed by Wabtec at its rail maintenance depot in Doncaster, Yorkshire are to begin a four-day strike on Friday, followed by a seven-day strike beginning June 27, with more strikes to be announced.

The Unite and RMT union members oppose a below-inflation pay offer and attacks on conditions. Wabtec is threatening to impose the changes via a fire and rehire of the workforce.

The US-based international company offered a below-inflation two-year pay increase and wants to cut breaks and impose extra working hours for no extra pay.

### **Lecturers at Richmond upon Thames College, London announce further strikes against fire and rehire**

Staff at Richmond upon Thames College in the UK capital are to strike on June 21 and June 28, which are open days for prospective students and their parents. The further stoppages are over plans to sack every tutor at the college and force them to reapply for their jobs on inferior terms and conditions, including the loss of ten paid holidays.

The 127 UCU members walked out for five days from May 23. The college pays them on average £26,000, lower than other colleges and schools in London. The annual pay gap between college lecturers and teachers averages £9,000.

The UCU offered to suspend action if management withdraws dismissal notices against those who refuse to sign the new contract.

Earlier in the month, workers voted 97 percent in an 88 percent turnout to strike.

The UCU leadership recently ended strikes in opposition to university employers' attacks on lecturers' pay, pensions and conditions in Higher Education.

### **Teachers in Dundee, Scotland to strike over plans to impose department head changes**

Secondary teachers employed by Dundee City Council, Scotland announced they will strike on June 22.

The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) members voted by an 88 percent majority to strike. The teachers are opposed to Dundee Council's plan to replace department heads in schools with a faculty system. The

EIS says this will “remove the vital experience offered by subject specialist principal teachers.”

### **Port workers in Lerwick, Scotland escalate industrial action over pay**

Around a dozen port workers in Lerwick, the Shetland Islands, Scotland who resumed industrial action on May 25 with an overtime ban, are to begin all out continuous strike action on June 20. This follows the breakdown of negotiations.

The Unite union members, comprising engineers, electricians, joiners and general operatives, oppose detrimental changes to their pay and conditions. These include basic pay, overtime rates, pension contribution and cuts to standby and call-out payments.

The port services liners as well as oil and gas production platforms. The port’s turnover for 2020 was £9.5 million, and it was given the Port of the Year award for 2021.

### **Waste management sorting plant workers in London to strike over inferior pay offer**

Workers at waste transfer stations located at Smugglers Way, Wandsworth and Cringle Dock in Battersea, London are to strike after rejecting the employer’s well below-inflation pay offer. They are employed by Cory Environmental Ltd.

The major waste management companies, Veolia, Biffa, Amey, Serco and Continental Landscapes use the services of Cory, which sorts waste, directing it to landfill or recycling.

The GMB members will take four days of stoppages, but the GMB has yet to announce dates. The GMB said the four days will be, “followed by more frequent dates of action.”

### **Refuse workers in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales vote to strike over pay**

Around 130 refuse workers employed by Rhondda Cynon Taf Borough Council in Wales voted by a 95 percent majority to strike over pay.

The strike vote of GMB members was announced at the end of May but the union has not announced any strike dates. The refuse collectors service around 108,000 homes in the borough.

### **British Airways staff at Heathrow airport, London strike ballot over pay**

Staff working as check in and ground staff for British Airways (BA) at London’s Heathrow airport are balloting for strike action.

The GMB members are angry that a 10 percent pay cut imposed during the pandemic has not been revoked. Other BA staff, including bosses, had their pay levels reinstated.

The ballot closes June 23 with the result due to be announced the same day. Any strike action will take place over the summer.

### **Scottish local government workers in strike ballot over pay**

Thousands of local government staff in all 32 Scottish local authorities are balloting over pay.

The Unite union members, who work mainly in refuse collection and as ancillary staff in schools, rejected a well below inflation pay offer of two percent. The ballot closes on July 26.

### **Ferry staff working for UK Red Funnel company to ballot over pay**

Ferry workers employed by Red Funnel on the service between the Isle of Wight and Southampton, England are to ballot over pay.

The 120 Unite union members work as customer service staff, ratings and shunters. They rejected a pay offer of between 4.5 and 6.5 percent for the lowest paid. Many of the workers are on the national minimum wage of £9.50 an hour. The ballot opens June 14 and closes July 5.

### **Unite union calls off strike action by oil refinery workers at Fawley, UK after new pay offer**

The Unite union called off strikes planned for June 9, 10, 16, 17 and 20 by around 100 workers at the US-owned ExxonMobil oil refinery at Fawley, England.

According to a Unite press release, “the workers accepted an offer to raise hourly rates and overtime premiums that will see annual wages increase by 9.2 per cent. A new working group on sick pay has also been set up.”

The workers held three days of strikes in April and early May, representing around a third of the workforce at the site. They 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.

Around a sixth of petrol filling stations and all UK airports are dependent on supplies from Fawley.

### **Union calls off Isle of Wight refuse strike after new pay offer**

The GMB union has today called off a two-week strike of refuse collectors on the Isle of Wight, due to begin next week, after workers accepted a new pay offer from employer Amey.

The workers had rejected Amey’s original below-inflation pay rise of 4.21 percent. Amey, which had refused to negotiate with the union, presented a new offer on Wednesday evening, which workers voted to accept.

Discussing the as-yet undisclosed “improved offer,” the GMB’s Gary Palmer said “Of course, our members didn’t get everything they wanted.”

### **Unions call off strike of bus workers in Northern Ireland after new pay offer**

A planned week-long strike of bus workers working for Translink in Northern Ireland, due to begin May 17, was called off by the GMB and Unite unions after the employer made a new pay offer, which has now been accepted. The details have not been made public.

Previously a week-long strike from April 25 and a one-day stoppage on May 6 were suspended by the unions after the company made a new offer, but the workers, who work as drivers, cleaners and shunters, rejected it.

The initial pay offer was for three percent, but this was increased and subsequently rejected. The unions put in a below-inflation pay claim of six percent.

### **Protest by Scottish tax revenue workers over job cuts**

Workers employed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in tax collection held a protest on Monday outside the new HRMC building in Glasgow.

The Public and Commercial Service (PCS) members were protesting the plans to cut 15,000 to 20,000 HMRC jobs over the next three years, along with attacks on pensions, imposition of below-inflation pay rises and cuts in redundancy compensation schemes.

### **Protests by workers in Palestinian West Bank against price rises**

On Monday, protestors took to the streets of Hebron on the Palestinian West Bank ahead of a strike the next day. They were protesting the sharp rises in prices for basic items.

Protestors said prices had surged by 30 percent since March. The Palestinian Central Statistics Bureau say the rise is between 15 and 18 percent. Police arrested several of the protestors.

### **Strike by judges in Tunisia opposing president's sacking of judges**

Judges in Tunisia began a week-long strike Monday. They were protesting the sacking of 57 judges by Tunisian president, Kai Saied last week. Saied accused the judges of corruption and protecting terrorists.

Saied responded to the strike by cutting the judges' wages. The attack on the judiciary is seen as part of an increasing power grab by Saied.

On Saturday, around 100 protestors were arrested in Tunis as they rallied in front of the electoral commission protesting Saied's growing authoritarian measures.

### **Strike by Israeli bus drivers**

Israeli bus drivers working for Superbus and Elektra Afikim Transport went on strike between 5am and 8.30am on Sunday. They are protesting low pay and staff shortages. Around 4,000 vacancies led to extra pressure on the bus drivers.

The workers threatened further stoppages every Monday if their demands are not met. Routes in Jerusalem, Tiberias and Haifa were among those affected. Demonstrations were held in Jerusalem and Haifa.

### **Strike threat by Israeli Foreign Ministry diplomats**

Staff working in Israeli Foreign Ministry offices abroad around the world have been involved in a dispute since the beginning of the year over pay. They have refused to work outside their regular hours without extra pay. Their work often involves working at odd hours, as they are in different time zones as compared to Israel.

The action so far has led to backlogs in issuing new Israeli passports for Israelis based abroad, and blocking of visas for workers in the Philippines, India and Nepal seeking to work in Israel.

The diplomats are now threatening the Finance Ministry with a full strike if it continues ignoring its demands. Unlike other Israeli ministries, the Foreign Ministry has seen its budgets fall over the last several years.

### **Lebanese state broadcasting staff hold strike over pay and allowances**

Workers at the Lebanese state-owned television broadcast service began a 24-hour strike on June 1. It led to the cancelling of programmes and news bulletins.

They were protesting inadequate pay and social assistance payments in the ongoing financial crisis in the country, which is pushing the population into abject poverty. Although initially launched as a 24-hour strike, it was cut short after a few hours following discussion between the union and the Information Ministry.

### **Protests in northwestern Syrian city of Afrin over power cuts and prices**

Protests hit the Kurdish city of Afrin in northwest Syria on June 3 as people took to the streets to protest regular power outages and the high cost of electricity.

Electricity supplied to the city by the Turkish-Syrian Energy (STE) company has been limited to 10 hours a day. This is when temperatures have reached 30 degrees celsius. Prices for electricity have also risen. Protestors lay siege to the STE headquarters in Afrin. Press reports state security forces opened fire on the protestors, injuring one.

### **Retired Iranian social security workers hold further protests**

Protests by pensioners and retirees of the Iranian Social Security Organisation held daily protests in several cities across Iran. They are protesting the low value of their pensions as inflation and sanctions continue to hammer the Iranian economy.

The cities include Ahvaz, Tehran and Yazd, among others. The protests originally took place for just one day a week, but are now taking place over several days, and are taking on an anti-government stance.

## **South African Sibanye-Stillwater gold strike ends with sell-out deal**

The three-month strike by 25,000 to 30,000 gold miners at Sibanye-Stillwater, South Africa has ended thanks to efforts by the unions to keep the dispute isolated. Severe hardship meant workers were forced to take the company's offer endorsed by the government's Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) refused to unite the gold miners' struggle with that of platinum miners, keeping their pay negotiations entirely separate.

The gold miners' initial demand of R1,000 a month each year for three years and six percent for artisans and officials was bargained down to R1,000 a month in the first year, R900 in year two and R750 in year three, with a 5.5 percent increase for artisans and officials. The workers will also receive a one-off "hardship" payment, of which R1,200 is cash, but the rest will be taken off debts owed to the company for food and board at the mine's properties.

The NUM national spokesperson blamed workers for the strike ending—an outcome of its own betrayal—saying the union "welcomed the return to work but were disappointed with the offer the members had settled for."

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.

## **Students in Cape Town, South Africa stand by principal who sought to protect them during pandemic**

Students at Heathfield High School in Cape Town, South Africa have protested for two weeks over the dismissal of principal Wesley Neumann, after he encouraged pupils and teachers from May to July 2020 not to attend school because of the risks during the pandemic.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) found Neumann guilty of misconduct, but learners, parents, staff and community members are fighting for his reinstatement, and students attempted to throw out two replacement principals sent by the WCED.

Neumann intends to appeal by referring his case to the CCMA.

## **South African tax workers' unions delay pay strike**

The nationwide strike begun May 25 by 12,400 tax and customs duty collection workers at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) has been suspended by the unions.

The Public Servants Association (PSA) and National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) members demand a 12 percent and 11.5 percent wage increase respectively. The tax body offered a 1.4 percent raise, citing a lack of funding from central government, despite inflation in the country running at 5.9 percent in April.

The PSA union has suspended the strike while talks continue. NEHAWU is asking its members for a mandate to continue the stoppage.

## **South African airline staff protest over no pay at crisis-ridden**

## **Comair**

Some of the 700 staff at South African airline Comair picketed the company premises June 3, in protest over operations being halted due to the company's liquidity being affected by high fuel costs.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) members do not know if they will be paid while services are suspended or if their jobs are safe.

Comair, which operates budget carrier kulula.com and has the franchise for British Airways' South African domestic operations, entered a business rescue programme in May 2020, and NUMSA accuse the Business Rescue Practitioners of corruption and incompetence.

## **Ugandan health workers ordered back to work after union talks with government**

Ugandan health workers who struck on May 16 were told to return to work by the Allied Health Professionals Association, following talks with the government. The union demanded "all health workers to report to duty with immediate effect."

Workers are demanding the implementation of a pay increase agreed in 2017.

Workers ignored the government's sack threat. The union then used the government's promise to "enhance all salaries" to end the strike. The government also agreed not to victimise the strikers. The union, however, ordered the return to work before the release of strikers in jail.

## **Sudanese health workers on strike are joined by other state-sector workers**

Health workers in Red Sea State, Sudan are continuing a strike, begun on June 29, to demand improvements in the salary structure.

They are joined by employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of South Darfur, who are facing the same issue.

The agricultural sector strikers protested outside the ministry headquarters in the state capital, Nyala, with chants demanding better pay. Employees of the Ministry of Finance organised similar protests, demanding implementation of promised improvements.

At least eight strikes are taking place simultaneously. Many unions in Sudan associated with the former regime of Omar Al Bashir were dissolved. There is a growing wave of anger over falling living standards.

## **South Sudan parliamentary support staff strike over non-payment of incentives**

Parliamentary support staff at South Sudan's Transitional National Legislative Assembly in the capital Juba held a strike Monday. The action comprised staff sitting at their desks but refusing to work. They held the stoppage to protest the non-payment of allowances due to them. The support staff are owed 5 million South Sudan Pounds.

The money set aside to pay the incentives was instead used to finance the return of the body of a South Sudan MP who died in Egypt. Security

forces surrounded the assembly building while the strike was taking place.

### **Kenyan health workers protest lack of promotions**

Health workers in Nairobi, Kenya protested to demand promotions and improved conditions of employment after being stuck in the same job for more than ten years. Staff in four groups had the same job for more than 12 years and those in other groups for between 9 and 11 years.

The most recent demonstration was at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre on June 7.

The workers, including nurses, clinical officers and lab technologists, are threatening to bring healthcare to a standstill unless their grievances are addressed. The Kenya National Union of Nurses branch secretary for Nairobi said the Nairobi Medical Service was leading the union in circles without suggesting further action.



To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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