

Unions sell out pilots' strike at Scandinavian airline SAS, agreeing to massive cuts to pay and conditions; UK rail dispute continues as thousands of Royal Mail workers vote to strike; Lebanese Information Ministry workers join public sector strike over wages; pay strike by thousands of tax collection workers impacts 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.*

### Unions sell out pilots' strike at Scandinavian airline SAS, agreeing to massive cuts to pay and conditions

On Tuesday, the unions representing pilots in Denmark, Sweden and Norway at the Scandinavian airline SAS signed an agreement ending an indefinite strike begun on July 4. Union members will vote on whether to accept the deal in August.

Pilots were opposing the company's "recovery plan," which involved vicious attacks on their pay and conditions to attract new investors.

*Reuters* reported that the unions signed off on enormous concessions, including a 25 percent pay cut, and an extension of maximum weekly working hours from 47 to 60, the maximum allowed under European Union Aviation Safety Agency regulations. SAS asked for a 10-year strike ban, and after some negotiations the unions agreed to five and a half years of "peace." The agreement also "involved higher productivity [and] increased flexibility in seasonal capacity," according to *Reuters*.

The unions largely hailed the outcome as a success, as SAS agreed to rehire 450 pilots who lost their jobs during the pandemic in the main company rather than a subsidiary, and the corporatist "Scandinavian model" of relations between SAS and the unions was preserved. Dansk Metal, which represents Danish pilots, told *Ritzau* the deal was "completely in line with the way we have a tradition of collaborating in Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia, and it shows the strength of the Danish model."

SAS told Danish newspaper *Berlingske* that its recovery plan involved cutting annual costs by 700 million euros, and 20 percent of that sum was to come out of staffing costs. Around half the planned cuts have now been made at the expense of the pilots, and the paper suggested SAS will look at cuts to be made among cabin crew and mechanics.

### Delivery workers at Just Eat strike in France and Florence, Italy over pay and job losses

On July 15, workers at Just Eat throughout France held a one-day strike, called by the General Confederation of Labour union (CGT) for a pay rise and improvements to hours and holidays. In addition, workers oppose a restructuring in France which would lead to 350 job losses among delivery workers and 40 among office staff, according to *Reuters*.

This follows last week's one-day strike in Florence, Italy called by the SI Cobas union. SI Cobas denounced the agreement between the major unions and the company which set pay below the level of the rest of the logistics industry. They called on Just Eat to apply the same terms to its delivery workers as other logistics workers, including a pay increase, more certain hours, a reimbursement of costs and safety measures.

### Workers in slaughterhouse walk out in Quimperlé, France over heat

Workers at the Bigard slaughterhouse in the French town of Quimperlé, Brittany walked out on an indefinite stoppage on Monday after the heat reached intolerable levels. A CGT union representative told *Ouest France* that temperatures were between 35 and 40 degrees Celsius.

Throughout this summer Bigard workers in Quimperlé have protested the high temperatures inside the slaughterhouse. On June 17, before the current deadly heatwave, most permanent workers walked out as temperatures approached 30 Celsius, demanding the ventilation system be repaired. Despite the intolerable conditions, only workers on permanent contracts were called to walk out by the CGT, which told *Le Télégramme* "Fixed-term contracts and temporary workers are of course not in a position to follow the movement."

### **Three-day strike in Greek medical labs over funding**

Workers in diagnostic and clinical labs in Greece began a three-day strike on Monday, demanding an increase in the amount paid per patient to clinics by the National Organisation for the Provision of Health Services (EOPYY), and a reduction in the “clawback” payments made by labs and clinics to EOPYY.

Doctors say the “clawbacks” are leaving several private clinics without the funds to pay salaries, and call for the cancellation of debts. Clinic doctors held a three-day strike for the same demands in May.

### **Protest and stoppage in Bologna, Italy against arrest of trade unionists**

On Wednesday, over 500 people gathered in the Italian city of Bologna for a protest and one-day stoppage called by the USB and SI Cobas unions to oppose police measures taken against eight of their officials, including six placed under house arrest, *il Fatto Quotidiano* reported.

The USB proclaimed a 24-hour strike to begin on Tuesday night, although it is unclear how many workers took part, and called for a national demonstration on Saturday.

USB and SI Cobas are among Italy’s “grassroots” unions, which denounce the traditional corporatist, pro-business unions. The grassroots unions also called several protests and stoppages against deliveries of weapons to fuel NATO’s proxy war in Ukraine.

The eight targeted union officials were accused of pursuing personal gain, but magistrates made particularly chilling comments denouncing their failure to sign employer-friendly deals. *il Fatto Quotidiano* wrote the magistrates accusing the unionists of extortion complained that “[i]ndividual multinationals or employers [...] were ‘subjected to a condition of exasperation’ that ‘forced them to accept the economic demands that were made to them’.”

### **Workers at Repsol energy company in Spain strike for pay increase**

Workers throughout Spain joined a three-day strike over the weekend at energy company Repsol, demanding a pay rise in line with inflation. The unions reported that around 95 percent of workers who were legally permitted to join the strike did so from last Friday.

The company told *Europa Press* not many workers out of its workforce of 16,000 walked out, but failed to mention that many of its operations were covered by minimum service requirements, effectively banning many workers from joining strikes. The unions called another three-day strike for August 13.

### **Emergency telephone operators in Spain strike against private concessions**

Hundreds of emergency telephone operators in Spain have held stoppages the past two weeks, against conditions in privatised services.

On July 15, around 100 workers in the city of Valladolid on the 112 and 061 emergency numbers walked out for 24 hours. They protested to

demand a new collective agreement, as they are currently covered by an agreement modelled on the telemarketing sector, leaving many workers without a permanent contract. High minimum service requirements were imposed, preventing many more workers from joining.

One of the major demands in Valladolid was for the right to maintain current pay and working conditions when the service is transferred to a new company. Five hundred workers operating the local help line 010 in Madrid were also called to walk out on Wednesday, as the new operating company has not even guaranteed workers on permanent contracts will keep them. The Workers Commissions union accused the outgoing operator of a “covert ERE [restructuring].”

### **Turkish miners strike against privatisation of pit**

Miners at the Soma coal mine in Eynez, Turkey stopped work on Monday to protest the transfer of part of the pit to a private company, reported *BirGün*. The mine is run by the state-owned Turkish Coal Enterprises (TK?).

Workers at Soma also protested last week, when the privatisation was announced.

Following a 2005 privatisation, Soma was the site of the worst mining disaster in Turkish history, when a fire smouldering for several days in 2014 caused the death of 301 mine workers.

### **RMT and Aslef unions squander strike votes, call uncoordinated, limited strikes in face of major restructuring of railways**

While UK workers at Network Rail and 14 train operators continue their dispute over a massive restructuring of the industry, involving job losses and attacks on conditions and safety, management remain intransigent.

Andrew Haines, chief executive of state-owned Network Rail, which oversees tracks and stations, said there will be “no significantly better deals”—referring to last week’s below-inflation five percent pay offer.

The Retail Price Index inflation rate soared to a 40 year high of 11.8 percent in June.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union nevertheless limited the next action to July 27, joined by Transport Salaried Staffs’ Association members. Train drivers’ union ASLEF called its strikes on July 16 and 23 for Hull Trains, July 23 for Greater Anglia and July 30 for Arriva Rail London, Chiltern Railways, Greater Anglia, Great Western, Hull Trains, LNER, Southeastern and West Midlands Trains.

The RMT pushed its next strikes back to August 18 and 20.

Around 40,000 RMT members walked out for three days in June, to demand a pay increase. The union’s only demand is for a below-inflation seven percent pay increase, and no compulsory redundancies.

This month the Conservative government passed legislation enabling the use of agency workers as a scab workforce to break strikes.

### **UK Churchill cleaners carry out further strikes over pay and conditions continue**

UK cleaners employed by Churchill on GTR, Network Rail, HIS and South East Trains walked out for a further three days from July 14.

In February, the thousand RMT members voted unanimously in two ballots to strike for £15 an hour pay, sick pay and free travel entitlement denied to them as outsourced workers. They are paid between £8.91 and £11.05 an hour.

In 2020, Churchill's profits were £10 million, and shareholders received a £12 million dividend.

### **Unite suspends UK rail maintenance workers' planned all-out stoppage at Wabtec site over "fire and rehire"**

Unite suspended the all-out strike by UK rail maintenance workers employed by Wabtec at the Flying Scotsman site in Doncaster. Workers were due to move to all-out strike from July 19 over "fire and rehire" plans, as the company tries to impose an inferior contract.

Workers are balloting on a new offer. Unite's press release provided no further detail.

The 200 Unite and RMT members, who maintain and repair rail stock, including carriages, wheels and bogies, took nine strike days in June and early July. The new contract includes a below-inflation two-year pay offer linked to break cuts and extra hours without pay.

Wabtec clients include LNER, Siemens, Hitachi, GB Railfreight and Freightliner. US-owned Wabtec's total sales for 2021 were £6.43 billion, paying out dividends to shareholders of £76 million.

### **Striking barristers protest outside parliament in London over pay and legal aid cuts**

Barristers began a week of strike action on July 11, with a protest outside parliament in the UK capital.

The Criminal Bar Association members walked out last month over pay and cuts to legal aid. Some junior barristers earn less than the minimum wage or £12,000.

They demand the government increases legal aid by 25 percent. The government funds legal aid which enables legal representation for those who cannot afford it, but cuts have led to quarter of criminal barristers resigning, and overwork for those remaining.

### **Budweiser brewery workers' pay stoppages in Lancashire, England continue**

Budweiser workers at the brewer's site in Lancashire, England walked out for 36 hours last weekend and on July 19 over pay.

The 225 GMB members rejected a three percent pay offer. The action followed several stoppages last month.

### **UK Royal Mail overwhelming strike vote over pay**

Around 115,000 UK workers at Royal Mail voted by 97.6 percent in a 77 percent turnout to walk out.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) members rejected a five

percent pay offer, with two percent backdated. CWU general secretary Dave Ward said there was a "small window" for talks to head off a strike.

Royal Mail made £758 million profit last year, awarding £400 million to shareholders. The strikes would begin in August.

### **Unite suspends UK Royal Mail managers' pay strike**

Following a ballot of 2,400 UK Royal Mail managers, a planned strike for July 20 was called off. Unite called the ballot despite outstanding issues, and talks continue.

Unite national officer, Mike Eatwell, said, "Unite's members ... accepted the senior management's return to the negotiating table to improve upon the jobs already put back into the crucial delivery and collection services" and "there is further to go."

Workers planned to walk out against 700 job cuts and pay cuts of up to £7,000.

### **UK car assembly workers at VFS Southampton Ltd to strike**

Car workers at VFS Southampton Ltd, England, who assemble large vehicles for Mercedes and Ford, will walk out July 27-28, and August 2, 4, 8, 10 and 12.

The workers voted to strike in March after rejecting a four percent pay offer but Unite sat on the vote and continued negotiations. Workers rejected the company's latest "insulting" offer in June.

### **Luxury car workers' two-week pay strike in UK West Midlands**

After striking for seven days in June, UK CabAuto workers in the West Midlands began two-week strike action on July 18 over pay.

The 100 Unite members are on £9.90 an hour fitting out luxury cars like McLaren, Bentley and Aston Martin, which sell for a quarter of a million apiece. Some workers resort to food banks. The company, part of Adler Pelzer Group—profits of £118 million in 2020—offered workers a three percent "rise."

### **Strikes at two schools in England over pay and academisation**

Lower paid support staff at Drapers' Pyrgo Priory school in Romford, London walked out for three days last week. The NEU members oppose the Academy school's proposed restructuring to make savings, seeing some workers losing £400 a month.

Teachers and support staff at Birmingham's Lordwood Girls School and Sixth Form Centre held a stoppage for three days last week, against the transfer of the school to King Edward VI Academy Trust. NEU members plan two more strikes.

The Conservative government plans for all schools to become Academies, publicly funded but privately run with the power to tear up teachers' national pay and conditions.

## **Uber workers strike and protest in London over poor pay and conditions**

On Wednesday, Uber workers in London went on strike over low pay, unfair dismissal and company corruption.

ADCU members protested outside taxi hailing company Uber's offices at Aldgate Tower, with placards reading "Stop Uber Greed." ADCU President Yaseen Aslam, said, "We want £2.50 a mile and 15 percent commission. We want Uber to obey the Supreme Court's ruling" to pay for full working time.

## **Strike vote at 39 Further Education colleges in England over pay offer**

Staff at 29 Further Education (FE) colleges in England voted to strike, after rejecting a 2.5 percent pay offer recommended by employer body the Association of Colleges. In a turnout of 57.9 percent, the strike vote was 89.9 percent.

Staff at four other northwest colleges and six in London voted separately to join the action. The London colleges include Barnet and Southgate College, Hackney, Redbridge, Havering, Epping Forest and Tower Hamlets.

The University and College Union (UCU) members' pay in colleges has fallen 35 percent since 2,009, £9,000 behind schoolteachers' pay. Seven in 10 consider leaving the profession. Some college bosses command salaries of £200,000.

Any strikes would begin after the summer break in September. In May, the UCU negotiated a separate below-inflation pay deal of three percent plus £1,000 at Bury college during pay strikes at six FE colleges in the northwest. In June, the UCU at Hopwood college accepted 7.5 percent.

The UCU refuses to mobilise its members nationally at all 370 FE colleges in the UK.

## **Refuse workers at Sandwell council, England plan pay stoppages**

UK refuse workers at Sandwell council employed by outsource company Serco will strike over pay. Sandwell council is run by the Labour Party.

The 60 Unite members including HGV (heavy goods vehicles) drivers, refuse collectors and street cleaners plan to walkout July 28, 29 and August 4, 5 and 8. Serco offered a below-inflation eight percent pay increase. Refuse collectors are paid a mere £9.95 an hour.

Serco increased profits by 25 percent, making £192.2 million last year, increasing dividend payments by 15 percent.

GMB members will walk out on July 28, 29 and August 5 and 8. Unison members are also involved.

## **Unite suspends fuellers' proposed pay strike at London's Heathrow airport**

Unite suspended a strike by fuellers at UK capital's Heathrow airport planned for July 21-25.

The Unite members employed by Aviation Fuel Services at KLM, Emirates, Virgin and Delta airlines rejected a 10 percent pay offer. They have not had a rise for three years.

After talks at conciliation service ACAS, Unite called off the action so workers can ballot on what they describe as a "sustainably improved offer."

## **OCS security officers at UK courts and tribunals to strike over pay**

Security officers employed by OCS at UK's Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Services will walk out over pay. The PCS members rejected a pay offer bringing them to 27p an hour above the £9.50 national minimum wage.

The workers will walk out on July 29 and August 2, 3 and 5.

Workers also demand £500 one-off payment, occupational sick pay from day one, paid time off for medical appointments and an extra day's leave.

## **Outsourced ancillary staff at eight National Health Service sites in England to walk out over pay and conditions parity**

Outsourced staff employed as porters, cleaners and catering staff by OCS at eight National Health Service (NHS) sites in Lancashire, England voted for further stoppages after taking three strike days last month.

The Unison members at The Harbour, Guild Lodge, Wesham rehabilitation unit, Royal Blackburn Hospital, Daisyfield Mill Clinic, Mount Clinic, Ormskirk District Hospital and Balladen House are demanding parity with directly employed NHS staff over pay and conditions.

Stoppages are planned on July 26, 27, 31 and August 1.

## **Strike threat across many UK sectors as workers reject below-inflation pay offers**

Workers across most sectors of the UK economy are rejecting below-inflation pay offers.

Port of Liverpool dockers will ballot from July 25 until August 15 over a seven percent pay offer. The 500 Unite members employed by MDHC container services will bring the UK's leading port to a standstill if a strike goes ahead. The company made £32 million profit last year.

Civil servants will begin balloting September 26 for six weeks over pay and pensions. The PCS union wants a 10 percent rise and minimum wage of £15 an hour.

The Fire Brigades Union gave notice to employers their members will not accept a two percent pay offer. Firefighters just endured the busiest day since World War II during the heatwave, hampered by years of cuts.

A pay offer of around five percent to public sector workers, including educators and NHS staff, to be paid from existing budgets, is expected to fuel a strike wave. On Wednesday, the Royal College of Nursing said it would ballot its members, calling for five percent above inflation.

## **Lebanese Information Ministry workers join public sector strike over wages**

On July 14, workers at Lebanon's Information Ministry began a week-long strike over pay and conditions. If their demands are not met by July 21, they will come out indefinitely, joining the public sector strike that has affected most government offices the last month.

The Ministry is responsible for the state's media, including the National News Agency (NNA), which provides daily news, official schedules and statements for local and international journalists. NNA stopped publishing news last Thursday morning. One of its last published statements was, "We are no longer able to bear the situation. We thought for a while that we would be able to overcome [the economic crisis] armed with a sense of professionalism and national responsibility. But we were in front of a dead end."

Since 2019, Lebanon has been hit by an economic crisis described by the World Bank as one of the worst in modern history. The currency devalued by about 95 percent. The official dollar exchange rate is LL1,500, but the national currency is trading at around LL29,000. Public sector workers are paid in line with the official rate, meaning they earn five percent of what they did before the crisis.

The most senior NNA employees earn LL3,000,000 per month—little more than \$100 at current black market exchange rates. An NNA worker told press wages now barely covered transport costs, and workers have not received travel compensation in four months.

Other public sector workers continue to join the strike. On July 12, heads of units at the Public Finance Directorate also announced indefinite strikes. They seek salary adjustment to an LL8,000 exchange rate. A directive from the Banque du Liban has allowed judges to be paid this, rather than the official rate.

## **Lebanese telecoms workers strike over conditions**

Workers at Lebanon's state telecommunications provider Ogero were on strike Monday, protesting deteriorating working conditions. Maintenance, control work and other services were suspended.

The employees' union complained about low wages, and that workers must pay for transport to work out of their wages, which "remain aligned at unacceptable levels." The network was affected by the country's escalating economic crisis—a lack of diesel for generators, power cuts, and delays in payment of funds.

The strike follows a massive increase in telecom tariffs, which came into effect on July 1, sparking outrage and protest. Mobile data on phones is unaffordable for many, and Wi-Fi, provided by Ogero, is unreliable due to severe electricity cuts.

Workers in Ogero's complaints department were subject to "repeated verbal and immoral attacks," according to the union.

## **Lebanese University teaching staff strike over pay and conditions, warning of the university's imminent "collapse"**

Amer Halawani, head of the executive board of the Association of Full-Time Professors has announced an open-ended strike at Lebanese University over pay and conditions. Staff refuse to mark exams, and no "exams or academic work will be held."

The country's economic crisis means academic salaries are worth about \$150, and there is a lack of basic services at the university. Academics are currently teaching online because lack of funding made in-person education impossible. The university budget is based on the official exchange rate of LL1,500, but the national currency is trading at around LL29,000. The university recently started to charge in dollars for some courses.

An Association member told *L'Orient Today* that academics take their own papers to print at the university: "They no longer provide us with pens, and electricity on campus has become a thing of the past."

The resort to online learning was also driven by the fact that students cannot afford to travel to university. Online learning, he said, "poses a problem for students who don't have electricity at home or access to the internet," which is increasingly the case since the recent increase in telecom tariffs.

The Association appealed to students for their support in the protests. Halawani said he hoped "the government will hear the last call for help before the university fully collapses."

## **Beirut Uber drivers strike in Lebanon, demanding fares match rising costs**

Beirut Uber drivers in Lebanon began a three-day strike on Monday, with drivers agreeing to boycott the service for six hours a day. They are calling on the firm to raise its fares, in order to cover drivers' costs.

Driver Darwish Taha explained to *The New Arab* that drivers take home 25 percent of each fare. The rest goes on fuel, maintenance and Uber itself. "Everything has gotten more expensive," said Taha, "But Uber's prices don't reflect this."

Basic goods rocketed in price since the economic crisis began in 2019. Petrol has become more than 500 percent more expensive. The telecoms tariff rise this month saw a fivefold rise in the price of mobile data, essential for Uber drivers to connect with passengers.

While local taxi firms adjusted their fares, Uber drivers are dependent on the app to set prices. Taxi firms are charging three times the price of Uber fares, according to Taha.

Driver Mahar Safar said before 2019, "We used to go home with between \$US100-150. Today, we'll go home with between \$US5-20." If drivers calculated their daily costs, he said, they would not go out: "We work so we can at least be doing something with our day."

Drivers tried to raise concerns with Uber but have not received any substantive answer. Uber closed its Lebanon office during the pandemic, and drivers report communication problems with the company.

There were a spate of protests at the company recently, following publication of "the Uber Files" by the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*. These revealed tax dodging and aggressive lobbying by the company for favourable legislation around the world.

The Files revealed the gig economy's culture of impunity and disregard for workers' safety.

## **Security forces attack Tehran demonstrators as Iranian pensioners' protests continue**

Pensioners and retirees protested in more than 20 cities across Iran last Saturday, including Tehran, Shush, Isfahan and Tabriz. They are protesting low and disproportionate salaries in the face of high prices and

surging inflation, humiliating rises in their pensions and government failure to respond to other demands.

Their protests are the focus of national anger at poverty, insecurity, and government austerity plans. Labour protests are increasing across the country over declining standards of living and wage arrears. In Shush, where pensioners were joined by family members, protesters chanted "The cost of inflation is the bane of people's lives." They spread a bare tablecloth in front of the governor's office to highlight their empty tables.

Pensioners are demanding cancellation of the 10 percent cap on wage increases, raising pensions above poverty level, free healthcare, the right to housing, an end to embezzlement and theft, and repayment of the millions of dollars of government debt to the pension fund.

Government security forces attacked a demonstration of social security retirees and retired teachers outside the Social Security Organisation and Ministry of Labour in Tehran. Details are not yet released of the number and identity of those arrested. Despite the attack, other retirees continued to demonstrate, chanting slogans including, "Government betrays, parliament supports."

In Shush, protesters called president Raisi "liar," saying, "Not the parliament, nor the government, Care about the people." They chanted, "Until we get our rights, we are here every day," and "Only on the street will we get our rights."

### **Iranian copper miners arrested after strike over pay and conditions**

After riot police broke up a strike by hundreds of miners at Iran's largest open-pit copper mine, it was reported that about 20 workers have been arrested.

Miners spent three days in tents and cars at the Sungun mine in East Azerbaijan Province, demanding better conditions and wage increases. Riot police broke up the strike on July 7.

The Free Union of Iranian Workers announced July 13, that around 20 workers have been arrested since then. They said Sungun management cooperated with security agencies to ensure the arrests.

### **Pay strike by thousands of tax collection workers impacts South Africa**

The nationwide strike, begun initially May 25 by 12,400 tax and customs duty collection workers at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and resumed July 12, is having a severe effect on services in the country.

SARS was forced to close 40 tax offices, and border posts throughout the country are struggling to cope. In Beitbridge, on the border of Zimbabwe and South Africa, long queues of trucks are affecting traffic movement in both directions.

The Public Servants Association and National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union members demand a 12 percent and 11.5 percent wage increase respectively. SARS have stuck to their 1.39 percent offer, saying their hands are tied and it is the government's responsibility to provide increased funding. The Revenue Service's offer amounts to a pay cut, as inflation is currently 5.9 percent.

### **South African security officers in national strike threat over pay**

Workers in South Africa's security sector are threatening to strike, after talks with the employers' negotiating body reached a deadlock last week. The private security sector is a critical part of the South African economy, employing around 450,000.

The South African Transport and Allied Workers Union members demand a 16 percent wage increase each year for the next three years. The Private Security Sector National Bargaining Council are offering 3.5 percent.

The union rejected the offer, saying they "will not back down until they meet our demands," but also stated they are "more than willing to negotiate with the employer," presaging a possible sell-out deal before a strike even commences.

### **South African food processors face "fire and rehire" move after striking in pay dispute**

Over 1,500 workers at the Heidelberg factory of Eskort, a South African pork products and other foods manufacturer and retailer, were dismissed and told to reapply for their jobs after they stopped work in protest over the company's pay offer.

The workers demanded a 15 percent pay increase, that casual workers be made permanent, a housing allowance and medical aid. Eskort refused to offer more than 6 percent.

### **200,000 South African public servants could strike for pay award**

Wage negotiations between public service workers and the South African government's Department of Public Service and administration have stalled. If the situation does not change, 200,000 public servants, including teachers and nurses, could go on strike.

The PSA union, representing the workers, rejected the government offer of an average two percent pay rise. They demand 10 percent across the board.

### **South African nurses demonstrate against over pay and conditions**

Nurses took to the streets across Gauteng province, South Africa on July 20, protesting poor working conditions. They also presented a memorandum of their grievances to the offices of the Gauteng Premier, Treasury and Department of Health in Johannesburg.

The Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa members object to the exploitation of community service nurses, who are not absorbed into the healthcare system despite completing their training. The nurses also complain of inadequate facilities, non-payment of salaries and staff shortages.

### **Taxi drivers threaten mass stoppages across South Africa to protest fuel costs**

Minibus taxi drivers in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape stopped work July 14

and blocked streets in the city, coming into conflict with police.

On July 6, a similar demonstration took place in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga province. The protests are symptomatic of a growing anger amongst drivers in South Africa, a country where taxis are the most used type of transport.

The National Taxi Alliance is in talks with the transport minister this week, after threatening a countrywide taxi shutdown. Drivers say they are struggling to survive, especially with high fuel prices, and demand the government intervenes.

### **Two-week strike by college staff in Bauchi, Nigeria, as national college strike is extended**

College and polytechnic staff in Bauchi, Nigeria began a two-week strike over pay and conditions on July 19.

The institutions affected by the strike are the Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, the Aminu Saleh College of Education, the College for Legal and Islamic Studies, the College of Agriculture in Bauchi and the College of Education in Kangere.

Joint Action Committee (JAC) Chairman, Abdulkadir Mohammed, told a press conference July 12 the action was to demand payment of outstanding salary arrears, resumption of promotion implementation and annual increments. He called on the Bauchi governor, Bala Mohammed, to intervene in the dispute.

Nationally, the Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) announced it is extending the ongoing strike begun June 10 by three weeks.

The COEASU President, Dr. Smart Olugbeko, said some strikers' demands have yet to be resolved, including pay, promised funds for revitalisation, and demands on a local level not addressed by state governments. He warned that the use of the "no work, no pay" rule and targeting local union leaders were further problems.

Issues leading to the strike include non-payment of outstanding promotion arrears from 2016, non-payment of allowances to librarians, non-release of N15 billion in revitalisation funds, non-implementation of a needs assessment report drawn up in 2014 and "poor funding of colleges of education and poor conditions across state-owned colleges of education especially in Ogun, Kwara, Abia, Kogi, Kaduna, Zamfara, Yobe, Oyo, Benue, Edo and Ebonyi states."

### **Ugandan local government workers resume strikes over pay**

Local government workers in Uganda resumed their pay strikes on June 13.

Talks between the Uganda Local Government Workers' Union (ULGWU) and the government on July 6 led to an agreement. The union accused the government of misrepresenting what was agreed in a letter sent by the Ministry of Public Service.

On July 13, ULGWU general secretary, Hassan Lwabayi Mudiba said the strike would continue until the government makes a credible offer. Increasing inflation has devalued the workers' wages.

### **Cement workers in Tororo, Uganda strike to demand inflation proof increase**

Cement workers in Tororo, Uganda walked out on July 18. Strikers included electricians, mechanics, lab technicians, and production staff, mainly from the kiln section.

One of the mill attendants, Paul Okumu, told media that he has worked at the company for more than 13 years. His daily wage is Shs11,000. The mill he runs crushes more than 85 tons of clinker per hour, and Okumu says his wage is not commensurate with his workload. He explained that meetings with managers failed to resolve low pay. Another worker said workers suffer a lot but earn minimal salaries.

Union member Waiswa Sinani is quoted as saying they had talked to management about a pay rise since May 2022 without any result.

The executive director of the factory handed an ultimatum to the strikers, saying they must negotiate a settlement, resign or he will sell the company.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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