

Aviation workers continue fight over pay and conditions throughout Europe; pensioners arrested as protests continue in Iran over a cost-of-living crisis driving many to suicide; public sector strike continues in Lebanon as economy in collapse; online protests against desperate poverty in Gaza; Nigerian university and college education workers' stoppage over pay and resources continues; four shot dead by police in South Africa protests over high energy costs in Pretoria Township

## Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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

### Europe

Hundreds of mainly non-unionised workers at Amazon's LCY2 depot in Tilbury, Essex, England walked off the job Wednesday night and staged a sit-in in the warehouse canteen. They were protesting an insulting 3.15 percent pay increase of 35 pence, from £11.10 to £11.45 for Tier 1 workers and £11.35 to £11.70 for workers with more than 3 years at the company.

Workers jeered when a supervisor told them to go back to work, saying, "You wanted to make a point; you made it. Every level in Amazon is aware of the situation."

When the supervisor claimed, "Staying in the canteen is probably not very safe with so many people," there were boos and cries of "We're used to it!" Told the action was "not going to change anything," the strikers responded, "You're losing money," with one saying, "The cost of living is going up and up." Several discussed demanding a £2 or £3 increase.

Some of the workers are members of the GMB union. Steve Garelick, the GMB union's Regional Organiser (Logistics and Gig Economy), tweeted that workers were being threatened with the sack for filming the action and that security had been told to confiscate phones. He added that Amazon had docked pay from the workers taking part and was "scouring social media to see who is uploading videos."

### European aviation workers continue fight over pay and conditions throughout Europe

Workers at airlines and airports throughout Europe are continuing their

fight against deteriorating working conditions, as pre-pandemic passenger levels return with massively reduced staffing levels. They are determined to win back "sacrifices" to their pay agreed by the unions at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cabin crew at Ryanair in Spain will begin a new campaign of strikes next week, involving four days each week until January. These stoppages follow 12 days in July called by the USO and SITCPLA unions, who accuse Ryanair of failing to follow Spanish labour law. The unions also accused Ryanair of firing eleven workers for supporting the strikes, and disciplining dozens more.

Ryanair and Spain's PSOE-Podemos government have implemented many strike-breaking measures since workers first walked out at the start of July, including a "minimum service" requirement preventing many workers from legally stopping work. Despite calling the application of minimum services "illegal," the unions organised no mass defiance leaving individual workers isolated.

The unions' division of the struggle against Ryanair along national lines has been repeatedly exploited by the company. Broadcaster *RTBF* reported this week that Belgian Ryanair workers were "seconded" to airports elsewhere in Europe to make up for shortages and delays.

Pilots at Ryanair in Belgium also walked out in several strikes in July, demanding the reversal of a 20 percent pay cut agreed by unions across all the airline's national operations at the start of the pandemic. Last week, the Belgian Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV/CSC) described as a "slap in the face" a report in the *Irish Examiner* that the salary of Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary returned to its pre-pandemic value this year. Spanish and French pilots' unions have agreed the same offer so far rejected by the Belgian unions, which would not fully reverse the pay cut until 2027.

Spanish EasyJet pilots will walk out for 72 hours from August 12. The SEPLA union called two further 72-hour strikes later in August, and is

demanding the restoration of pre-pandemic working conditions, while the company is demanding further cuts. The USO union called off a strike of cabin crew at EasyJet last week, agreeing a three-year pay deal which would increase salaries by four percent in 2022, 13 percent in 2023 and five percent in 2024, according to *el Periódico*. With annual inflation in Spain currently at 10.8 percent and rising, this deal will cause an enormous decline in workers' living standards.

Cargo pilots at Dutch airline KLM held a work-to-contract action on Monday, called by the Alternative for Unions (AVV) union against the company's plans to impose different working conditions on some pilots. According to *De Telegraaf*, AVV represents pilots who joined KLM when it merged with cargo airline Martinair in 2014. A court forced KLM to rehire these pilots after it fired them en masse, but the AVV now says KLM wants to impose a different collective agreement on Martinair pilots.

Workers at Santa Maria airport, in the Azores, Portugal, began an overtime ban on Wednesday until October. The Civil Aviation Workers Union (SINTAC) called the ban to denounce low staffing levels at the airport, according to *Lusa*. SINTAC and the Commercial Aviation Staff Union (SQAC) members will also walk out on a three-day national strike on August 19, *Reuters* reported.

### **Xiaomi-Salcomp electronics workers occupy factory in Turkey to oppose union-backed layoffs**

Workers at the Xiaomi-Salcomp electronics company in Istanbul, Turkey, owned by two China-based multinationals, began an occupation of their factory on Wednesday, opposing the loss of 300 jobs.

The company and the Türk Metal union, a member of the pro-government Türk-İş confederation, announced they had worked out an "incentive package" to encourage workers to leave, but according to the newspaper *Evrensel* this was only 30,000 lira (around 1,650 euros) with no seniority bonus.

A group of Xiaomi-Salcomp workers published a statement in *Evrensel* denouncing Türk Metal for endorsing the "incentive package" and refusing to call a strike. They said many workers at the factory were pressured into signing "voluntary" redundancy, knowing they would be fired if they did not. They wrote "Why does our union not say, 'Friends, we are stopping work, we are going on strike, we will not fire a single person,' but rather offer incentive packages to people?" They called for Xiaomi-Salcomp workers to follow the example of workers at TPI Composites, who held a wildcat strike in July in opposition to their own Petrol-İş union, another Türk-İş affiliate.

### **Workers at Atışkan plaster company in Turkey continue indefinite pay strike**

Workers at the Atışkan plaster company in the Turkish city of Eskişehir, on an indefinite strike over pay for five weeks, held a large demonstration in the city centre on Wednesday. They walked out on June 30, when the Kristal-İş union did not reach a new collective agreement with the company.

Workers at Atışkan are paid only 200-300 lira above the minimum wage each month, and Kristal-İş is also demanding an increase in additional payments, such as fuel allowances. Speaking to *Evrensel*, one worker said this week, "Real inflation is much higher than the official figures, but the boss of Atışkan Plaster says take the minimum wage.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to live on this wage."

### **Textile workers in Turkey continue picket of closing factory for unpaid bonuses**

Around 350 workers at the ETF Textile factory in the Tuzla district of Istanbul began a stoppage two weeks ago, demanding they are paid the bonuses owed following the announcement that the factory will close. Workers began a picket outside the plant, and according to *Evrensel* they turned away two lorries which came to remove goods.

To prevent any occupation of the factory, management erected enormous iron fences, and locked the doors to all toilets in the factory. After some workers entered the plant to occupy it, they were thrown out by security.

### **Portuguese registry workers begin strikes over pay and staffing levels**

On Monday, Portuguese registry workers, responsible for processing official documents such as marriage certificates and passports, held the first of eight planned one-day stoppages in August and protested in Lisbon. A second walkout is scheduled for this Friday.

The National Union of Registries (SNR) called the strike to demand an improvement in pay and increased hiring, as well as other demands related to career progression and working conditions. The SNR estimated that 80-85 percent of workers in the service joined Monday's strike.

### **New warning strike at privatised university hospital in Hesse, Germany**

Non-medical workers at the Giessen and Marburg University Hospital (UKGM) in the German state of Hesse joined a two-day warning strike on Tuesday, called by the United Services Union (Verdi) to demand guarantees over job security.

In 2006, UKGM became the first privatised university hospital in Germany, after 95 percent of its shares were sold to a private hospital group Rhön-Klinikum.

According to the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Rhön-Klinikum terminated an agreement with the state, with protection against job cuts and a ban on outsourcing expiring at the end of the year. Verdi said there was an extreme staff shortage at the hospital, and that UKGM management told workers who tested positive for COVID-19 to turn up to work and care for patients.

### **Construction workers declare hunger strike over unpaid wages in Hamburg, Germany**

On July 27, around a dozen construction workers at a site in Hamburg, Germany protested on the roof of a building due to be demolished, and declared a hunger strike over unpaid wages, the *Hamburger Abendblatt* reported. The workers were removed from the roof by police.

According to the paper, the company contracted to demolish the building subcontracted one company, which subcontracted another in turn, which hired the protesting construction workers.

### **Construction workers on Thessaloniki Metro site in Greece strike over layoffs**

Workers at the construction giant AKTOR, a contractor for the new metro system in Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city, held two 24-hour strikes on Monday and Thursday against 24 layoffs.

According to *902.gr*, the Thessaloniki Builders' Union called the stoppage to demand all 24 workers be rehired, additional safety measures on the site and a 15 percent pay rise in the new collective agreement.

### **Metro drivers strike for better pay in Yerevan, Armenia**

On July 27, metro drivers in the Armenian capital Yerevan began a strike at 6am demanding better pay. According to *Zerkalo*, the union representing the drivers quickly entered negotiations with the management of the state-owned metro system, and by 9.30am agreed to call off the strike.

### **Pay strike of bus workers in northwest England enters third week**

Around 1,800 Arriva North West bus workers are in the third week of an all-out strike over pay. The workers are out at 11 garages across northwest England. The wage rates for bus drivers vary across the bargaining unit, with those at Winsford on just £11.08 an hour.

The strike began on July 20, after GMB and Unite union members voted by 96 percent on a 72 percent turnout.

The company is seeking to impose what it describes as an 8.5 percent deal, under conditions in which RPI inflation is nearly 12 percent. Even the lower CPI measure is at 9.4 percent, with predictions it could hit 12 percent in October. The company's offer is split into two parts, with just five percent being paid from April and the rest in October.

Talks between Arriva and Unite and GMB trade union officials on Monday broke down with no agreement.

In London, bus drivers occupied the offices of Transport for London (TfL) on Wednesday, protesting the plans of bus companies, TfL and Labour mayor Sadiq Khan to decimate services. A petition to stop cuts to routes gathered 3,400 signatures.

Unite has negotiated below-inflation deals at bus companies across the UK and blocked a unified mobilisation of its members against the cost-of-living crisis.

### **Bus workers in Durham, UK to walk out over planned closure of bus depot**

Around 170 bus workers employed by Go North East at its depot in Chester-Le-Street in County Durham are set to begin a continuous strike

August 12.

The Unite union members are opposing plans by the company to close the depot in September. While the company said it will transfer drivers and engineers to other depots in the company, no assurance was given to admin and cleaning staff. Drivers and engineers may also face travelling up to 14 miles to an alternative depot.

### **UK rail maintenance workers employed by Hitachi Rail strike over pay and conditions**

Workers employed by Hitachi Rail began a three-day strike on Monday, over pay and conditions.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members, who maintain rolling stock and infrastructure, rejected a 7.5 percent pay rise with strings attached. The strings meant workers would lose over 100 hours of annual leave.

The Hitachi Rail workers seek pay and conditions in line with those of workers at Hitachi Doncaster and Hitachi North Pole maintenance. The strike was expected to disrupt maintenance work at LNER, Scotrail and TPE rail companies.

Around 40,000 RMT members walked out for four days in June and July against the government's Great British Railways plan, which will decimate jobs and slash pay and conditions. Train drivers' union Aslef held a one day strike last month.

### **Rail workers in London, UK set to strike over pay, jobs and pensions**

Rail workers on the London Underground and the Overground network will hold a 24-hour strike on August 19.

The RMT members are involved in separate disputes. The Underground workers are involved in a long-running dispute over plans to cut pensions and jobs, while the Overground rail workers employed by Train Operating Company Arriva rejected a well below-inflation five percent pay offer.

### **UK barristers continue strikes over pay and legal aid cuts**

UK barristers are continuing their programme of strikes, with stoppages all this week. They are currently striking every other week. The next round of action begins on August 15

The Criminal Bar Association members walked out in June, 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.

### **Ferry staff working for UK Red Funnel company continue stoppages over pay**

Ferry workers employed by Red Funnel on the service between the Isle of Wight and Southampton, England are continuing their programme of walkouts, being on strike Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

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 such as cleaners are on the national minimum wage of £9.50 an hour, compared to cleaners at another local firm, Wightlink, on £10.99. Some resort to foodbanks.

All staff are responsible for passenger safety and undergo sea training. Time away from home, sometimes days, is awarded no expenses.

Further stoppages are planned for August 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 23, 26 and 29. Cowes [regatta] Week (July 30-August 6) and the summer holidays will be affected.

### **Refuse workers in Surrey, UK begin three-week strike over pay**

UK refuse workers employed by outsourcing company, Amey to collect domestic waste in areas of Surrey began a three-week strike on Monday. They cover the towns of Camberley, Cobham, Esher, Frimley, Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge in Surrey.

The GMB union members are seeking an improved pay offer.

### **Further walkouts by outsourced ancillary staff at eight National Health Service sites in England 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 were on strike Monday, Monday's stoppage was the seventh, following walkouts in June and July. More stoppages were planned for Thursday and Friday.

The Unison members at The Harbour, Guild Lodge, Wesham rehabilitation unit, Blackpool and 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. They voted by a 92 percent majority to walk out.

### **Dockers at UK's largest port, Felixstowe, vote to strike over pay**

Port workers employed by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company in East Anglia, England voted by a 92 percent majority to strike after rejecting a five percent pay offer, less than half the current rate of inflation. Felixstowe is the UK's largest port.

No strike date was given, but if it goes ahead, it will be in late August. Unite was in talks with the company on Monday to try and avert action, but talks broke down. Further talks were scheduled for Thursday.

The Felixstowe port workers are in a strong position, with nearly half the UK's container traffic passing through the port.

### **Logistics workers supplying supermarkets in Scotland and Northern Ireland announce strike over pay**

Around 300 DHL logistics workers at the distribution centre in Langlands Park, East Kilbride, Scotland are to hold a week-long strike beginning August 13. The distribution centre supplies supermarket chain Sainsbury's stores throughout Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Unite union members voted by a 96 percent majority to strike in opposition to DHL's below-inflation pay offer. Talks mediated by government conciliation service ACAS were unable to impose a deal. The offer to DHL workers in Scotland would mean them being on lower pay than other UK DHL staff.

### **University and College Union ends dispute at Goldsmiths University, London**

On Tuesday, the University and College Union (UCU) announced its members had voted to accept a deal over compulsory redundancies. They were involved in a 10-month long dispute, as the university tried to sack 46 staff as part of a financial recovery plan.

The academic staff held strikes and carried out a marking boycott. Under the deal the university management agreed to no further compulsory redundancies and that they would review the use of fixed term contracts.

Professor Des Freedman and Dr. Gholam Khiabany remain suspended by the university for informing students about the potential impact of the marking boycott.

Africa

### **Four dead in South Africa protests over high energy costs in Pretoria Township**

At least four South Africans died, and thousands were injured during protests over the cost of electricity in Thembisa township, Johannesburg.

Thembisa residents shut down the township and fought running battles with the police over service delivery and "expensive" rates, taxes and high electricity bills. Community leaders said free electricity and free six kilolitres of water were cancelled. The community has been complaining about high electricity bills for months.

Power cuts from utility company Eskom are common in the townships. Unemployment in the township is more than 34.5 percent, with youth unemployment at nearly 64 percent. As food prices rise due to wheat shortages, protests are becoming more frequent.

Workers barricaded roads with burning tyres and set fire to municipal buildings in Rabasotho and Ethafeni. Three died in alleged police shootings, two at Rabasotho and 43-year-old Pheta Molonyama, who was hit by a bullet while buying a cigarette at one of the shops in Makhulong Section.

A community leader told *Pretoria News* he suspected more people had died during the protests, accusing the police of targeting them. "These people have come here to kill us. They have not come to keep control. The man they killed in Rabasotho was inside the yard. He was not even part of the crowd. So why was he shot? You can see from his wounds that he was shot with a shotgun. Why do they use live ammunition to disperse crowds?"

The leader said residents would continue with the protests until their demands were met. Mayor Tania Campbell promised to meet the protesters, but sent officials instead. Campbell denounced the protests as a "well-orchestrated operation to render the township ungovernable."

Two weeks ago, former President Thabo Mbeki warned the country could see an uprising similar to the Arab Spring.

### **South African Revenue Service workers' strike over pay faces trade union sabotage**

South African Revenue Service (SARS) workers continue their pay strike, having closed 21 branches on July 21 for in-person visits. The nationwide stoppage, begun May 25 by 12,400 tax and customs duty collection workers and then resumed on July 12, is having a severe effect on services in the country.

The Public Servants Association (PSA) union rejected the government's initial offer of an average two percent. National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union members are demanding an 11.5 percent wage increase.

Opposed to rallying over 200,000 public servants, teachers and nurses to take joint strike action, the PSA returned to negotiations with a wage demand reduced from 10 percent to 6.5 percent. In June, inflation in South Africa was 7.4 percent, the highest in 13 years.

### **South African ANC admin staff protest over non-payment of salaries**

Administrative staff of South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC), in an ongoing dispute over unpaid salaries, protested outside the ANC national policy conference on July 29. The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union members have not been paid for two months, and claim funds are available to pay them. At least 50 percent of wages are owed. Workers faced a large police presence as the ANC tightened up security.

They also picketed the ANC annual gala last week. Tickets to this lavish fundraiser cost as much as R1 million. Workers said they were left with no choice: "As they enjoy in that venue, there are families that are going to sleep without food."

### **South African waste collection workers in Durban on go-slow**

Department of Cleansing and Solid Waste workers in some regions of Durban, South Africa are on a go-slow after a 50 percent cut in the overtime budget, introduced on Monday, affecting waste collection and street sweeping services.

The vehicles used by the 1,400 workers are old and constantly breaking down.

Management accused workers of abusing the overtime payment system and called it a "flawed incentive structure." They acknowledged, however, that "We accumulate large amounts of overtime because of the large areas that we have to cover, the events (social events) and the informal settlements that we have to service."

### **Nigerian education workers' strike over pay and resources continues**

Striking Nigerian workers, students and others defied the government's security clampdown in the capital city, Abuja on July 27, to demand the government accedes to demands by lecturers and other university staff and reopen the universities. They arrived on the streets in the early morning, chanting slogans including "Save education, address issues now," and "We are tired of unfulfilled promises."

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members walked out on February 14, and were joined by non-academic staff as well as staff at polytechnics and colleges.

They want an end to the delay in releasing revitalisation funds for universities and increased salaries, and oppose new payroll software. On August 1, the ASUU extended the strike by another four weeks, citing the government's failure to fulfil its promises.

More than eight million students in Nigeria's public universities are affected.

### **Nigerian oil workers down tools over anti-labour practices**

Nigerian oil workers at Addax Petroleum Development Nigeria, part of China's Sinopec Group, downed tools on July 27 over pay.

Addax employs about 324 workers, 183 of whom are contractors. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Senior Assistant General Secretary (Lagos Zone) Babatunde Oke, told media the "strike was embarked upon by our members due to the Management's refusal to engage our Association on the financial settlement earlier agreed on."

Addax had its licenses revoked by the Department of Petroleum Resources in March last year, due to its failure to develop all the areas in which it was given a license. The strike was expected to cause a drop in Nigerian oil output of around 22,000 barrels per day.

### **Resident doctors in Osun State, Nigeria strike over lack of security**

Resident doctors at Osun State University Teaching Hospital began a 72-hour strike on July 30 to protest over four "dreadful" attacks on staff members in the last two months. On July 28, doctors were attacked by relatives of a patient who died while being resuscitated after a severe head injury. Many doctors were injured.

### **Doctors on indefinite strike in Sierra Leone over pay cut**

Doctors throughout Sierra Leone began an indefinite strike on August 1. They complain the loss of between 20 and 40 percent of take-home pay in May, after the government ended their monthly COVID-19 risk allowance and removed a tax allowance in place since the pandemic began.

The strikers are also demanding fulfilment of a promise of fuel allowances of 45 litres per week.

Similar strikes by doctors took place in 2018 and 2020. Sierra Leone has some of the worst health provisions in the world, causing the worst outcomes. The government refused to acknowledge any problem, saying the strike was unnecessary.

Middle East

## **Pensioners arrested as protests in Iran continue over a cost-of-living crisis driving many to suicide**

At least 16 protests were reported across Iran on Sunday, July 31. As in previous months, pensioners and retirees have been at the forefront of the protests against poverty, high prices and low wages.

Pensioners in Ahvaz protested alongside nurses and workers from the Ahvaz National Steel Industrial Group. Workers at detergent manufacturer Darugar continue to protest outside the factory, demanding payment of insurance wages delayed for five months.

Pensioners of the state-owned Iran Telecommunication Company held protests against non-payment and reduction of their benefits in Tehran, Kermanshah, Shahrekord, Tabriz, Isfahan, Ahvaz and elsewhere. Social Security Organisation pensioners protested in Rasht and Kermanshah.

Police dispersed the Tehran protest, arresting several pensioners.

Since July 12, security services have arrested a dozen social security retirees protesting in Ahvaz. Three other pensioners were earlier released on 5,000 million Rials bail after 20 days in solitary confinement. Social security pensioners in Ahvaz demanded the release of the prisoners in a protest rally Saturday.

Also in Ahvaz, a Haft Tappeh Sugarcane retiree, Hassan Tarabi, was arrested a week ago. Bahram Gorgan, a retiree of the Khuzestan Steel Company, was reported arrested on July 23, with no information available about the charges against him.

The pensioners have become the focus of widespread protests against the desperate economic crisis, exacerbated by US sanctions. Salaries increased by just 10 percent, while soaring inflation saw food prices jump more than 82 percent since May, when the government ended food import subsidies. Cooking oil prices rose 200 percent in one month. Bread and cereal prices are 93.8 percent higher than a year ago. Dairy prices rose 111 percent in the same period.

Official figures suggest an annual rent increase of 31.7 percent, but many tenants describe rises of up to 100 percent, driving many to homelessness. There have been several reports of suicide by workers in the face of the crisis, including many teachers.

Last month saw two new reports of self-immolation. A water and waste worker in Lahijan set himself on fire in protest at his suspension. In the city of Ilam, 30-year-old Jamil Valibaygi set himself alight because of financial pressures. In June, a worker in Yasuj set himself on fire over his inability to pay a debt of about 10 million tomans (\$300).

## **Public sector strike continues in Lebanon as economy in collapse**

The indefinite strike of public sector workers in Lebanon, begun last month, continues to spread. All areas of public administration are affected.

Workers demand adjustment of wages in the face of a severe economic crisis. The currency lost around 90 percent of its value in the last three years, poverty levels are at 74 percent, and around one third of the workforce is unemployed. The United Nations says the current minimum monthly salary is less than US\$25, and workers say wages barely cover travel costs.

Workers in administrative units of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education joined the strike recently. There were fears July salaries will be affected, as Finance Ministry workers are striking. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Finance Minister Youssef Khalil attempted to convince them to return to their offices ensure strikers received July salaries on time, but their interim proposals did not satisfy the strike committees.

## **Gaza protests at cost-of-living crisis move online**

Palestinian writer Yusri al-Ghol has taken online the “Bidna Naish”—Arabic for “We want to live”—protest against price rises and wage cuts. The protest began at the Jabalya refugee camp in 2019, where it was broken up by Hamas security forces.

The economic situation, exacerbated by the Israeli blockade and recent price hikes driven by the conflict in Ukraine, has worsened. Poverty is rampant and unemployment stands at nearly 50 percent. Infrastructure is crumbling, with electricity supplies running short, undrinkable tap water and collapsing health care. The protest said, “We don’t have light, we don’t have air, we don’t have food, we don’t have water.”

In recent weeks there have been at least three reported suicide attempts by Gazans in desperate economic straits.

In recent weeks, Hamas announced a raft of new taxes on imported goods and office supplies which came into effect August 1. Ahead of the new school year, when demand rises, taxes of \$3 on jeans and \$230 on a ton of plastic folders for storing papers will hit parents hard. Packaged nuts, previously imported tax free, now incur a tariff of 2,000 shekels (\$600) per ton. The tariff on toilet paper per ton rose from \$90 to \$580.



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