National teachers' 24-hour strike in Hungary over pay; Strikes across France in education sector continue, including vocational high school teachers against government "reform"; UK class struggle intensifies as postal workers, university lecturers, teachers and train drivers prepare to walk out; protests and strikes over death of Iranian Mahsa Amini at hands of police in ninth week link up with commemoration of 2019 massacre; further 24-hour public sector pay strike planned in South Africa against three percent pay offer

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

Nationwide teachers' strike in Hungary, defying government repressions

On Friday, teachers in Hungary will walk out on another one-day national strike, the latest in a long-running dispute over pay.

According to *Napi.hu*, the teachers' unions were offered a pay freeze for this year and pay rises of between 10 and 20 percent next year in talks with the government. Pay would rise by less than 30 percent between now and 2025. Inflation increased to 21.1 percent in October, which is the equivalent over a three-year period of a 77.6 percent rise in prices.

Students joined teachers' rallies during walkouts, and student organisations called their own demonstrations in support of the pay strikes. *Eduline* reported that teachers in at least three schools stopped work from Monday, defying the draconian minimum service requirements imposed by the government.

At least five teachers were fired for participating in the strikes. According to the Democratic Trade Union of Teachers, one school district deducted 33,000 HUF from teachers' pay for joining a two-hour warning strike, more than an entire day's wages.

Teachers in vocational high schools strike against French government "reform" alongside other educators and students

Teachers in France's vocational high schools joined a one-day national strike on Thursday, opposing a government "reform" which doubles the amount of time students spend working on placements in companies. Joined by many students at protests, this is the second walkout by teachers against this new measure, which would drastically reduce teaching time and treat students as a low-wage workforce.

Local radio network *France Bleu* interviewed many students about the reform. A final-year student, Eléanor, said "We will work too much in businesses, without being paid. It's slavery." Camille, a student on an internship in the catering industry, said "We won't have enough culture, and surely won't be able to manage in life as we should, if we don't have enough general knowledge." Her classmate Emmanuella added, "I have difficulties in school and already have problems organising myself. If they double the working time, I won't be able to follow the classes. I'm afraid of not getting my diploma."

Medical students held a one-day national strike on Thursday, opposing a new law which aims to use them to fill shortages in the medical system. They also walked out on Thursdays and Fridays of the past two weeks.

The new social security bill would extend the internship for trainee GPs by a year and deploy them in "medical deserts," remote areas short of GPs. Organisers of previous protests against the bill said that 10,000 interns joined the demonstrations and 40 percent went on strike.

Thousands of construction workers strike in Switzerland against "flexible" working hours

Around 15,000 striking construction workers joined demonstrations in the last month across Switzerland during negotiations between unions and

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the Swiss Society of Entrepreneurs (SSE), according to *Le Temps*.

Workers oppose the SSE's demands for new "flexible" working hours to be included in the national collective agreement. Unions say this would open the door to 12-hour days during the summer and forced leave during the winter.

While the SSE denied the unions' figure of a maximum 58-hour working week—claiming up to 10 hours travel time per week was "not relevant" and employers were happy with the current maximum of 48 hours—it did not deny aiming for 12-hour days.

The SSE also attempted to drag the unions to court, claiming workers had no right to strike since the unions agreed to "absolute labour peace." *Le Temps* reported the SSE's complaint was thrown out by the courts on October 31.

Unions end Norwegian kindergarten strike after agreeing pensions deal

Three unions representing workers in private sector kindergartens in Norway ended the strike by over 3,600 workers on Thursday, after agreeing a pensions deal with the employers' association PBL.

Kindergarten workers began indefinite strikes on October 17, demanding equal pensions for private with public sector workers.

PBL's managing director told *FriFagbevegelse*, "The parties have shown a great willingness to compromise, and this has resulted in a solution that is good for all parties." The unions presented the deal as a victory and recommended their members vote in favour, having dropped all talk of equality with public-sector pensions.

The agreement, signed after PBL and the unions met with the government's mediator, introduces a new pension scheme which will be introduced when it is "ready," from January 2025 at the latest. This follows a very similar promise made in 2021, when PBL agreed to "the aim of introducing [the new pension scheme] from 1 January 2023 at the latest."

While the deal increases employer contributions towards the pension scheme, from four percent of salary to five, PBL celebrated the fact that it had saved 1.4 billion kroner (135 million euros) by excluding workers born before 1967 from the new pension scheme.

Long-running strikes at cigarette factory, chemical works and flour plant continue in Turkey

Workers from several workplaces across Turkey continue a number of indefinite strikes against lockouts, oppressive working conditions and wages, which have fallen below the poverty level due to surging prices. Many workers have been victimised or fired for trying to join unions.

In the city of ?zmir, workers from the Marlboro cigarette factory, owned by American multinational Philip Morris International, have been on strike since September 20. The strike began after a dozen members of G?da-?? (Food Union) were fired by a subcontractor for opposing their transfer to another firm.

Since the stoppage began, more than 100 workers were fired, and according to *Evrensel* they were blacklisted and struggled to find jobs elsewhere. The newspaper reported that strikers rejected an offer of severance pay and are demanding their jobs back and recognition of G?da-??.

More members of G?da-??, who were fired for joining the union at the Yasin Çakir flour factory in the city of Eski?ehir, continue to protest and demand their jobs back.

The company fired 22 workers in mid-October for being involved with the union, *Cumhuriyet* reported.

Also in Eski?ehir, workers from the At??kan Plaster factory have been on strike since June 30, demanding collective negotiations between the company and the Kristal-?? union. More workers at the Pulver chemical plant in Gebze spent their hundredth day protesting outside the factory last week, *Evrensel* reported, after they were fired for joining the Petrol-?? union.

Doctors defy minimum service requirement and continue strike for more staff in Madrid, Spain

Doctors in the new 24-hour care centres in Madrid, Spain continue the indefinite strike begun last week, opposing the extra burden of operating the centres when there are not enough workers to staff them. The strike was called by the Amyts union, after other unions signed an agreement allowing the centres to open.

The government imposed 100 percent minimum service requirements on the strike, but according to *Europa Press* seven of the 80 care centres in the Madrid region were closed on Monday, and 37 were understaffed.

Couriers strike over poor wages and conditions in Barnaul, Russia

Couriers for Samokat, a Russian app-based grocery delivery service, began a strike on Tuesday in the city of Barnaul.

According to *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, workers reported having to ride poorly maintained bikes, and that a bad-weather surcharge is only paid if they work for more than seven hours per shift, which is impossible for many workers and students who work part-time.

Workers also said that they were paid barely more than in the summer, despite conditions often being dangerous in the Siberian winter, with rain and ice. According to *Pogoda i Klimat*, the highest temperature on an average November day in Barnaul is -2 degrees Celsius, falling to -9 degrees in December.

On a Telegram post, a Barnaul courier wrote, "There are terrible bicycles in warehouses that are impossible to work on. There have already been cases when a courier's wheel simply fell off during delivery," and pointed out that hourly wages in Novosibirsk are 60 rubles higher. Workers demand the basic wage be raised to 210 rubles per hour, that the bad weather surcharge is paid for every shift, and that bicycles are repaired regularly.

Workers at Cyprus Electricity Authority begin strikes over understaffing

Workers at the Cyprus Electricity Authority began a series of strikes with a one-hour walkout on Thursday, opposing understaffing and other issues at the company.

According to *Polites*, after 90 percent of workers voted in favour, the four unions calling the strike said they would fight to protect "the safety and health of the staff, the electricity costs and the timely, safe and

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efficient service of consumers.” A one-day strike is also planned for next week.

A stoppage was scheduled last week, but the unions postponed the announcement due to the death of the Archbishop of Cyprus, Chrysostomos II. Chrysostomos was an open supporter of the National Popular Front, the Cypriot sister party of the Greek neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn.

UK class struggle sharpens as number of strikes grows

With nearly 1.7 million workers preparing to strike or being balloted for strike action in the UK, industrial action is at its highest level for decades.

Workers are determined to defend their jobs, pay and conditions as RPI inflation soars to 14.2 percent. The end of this month sees strikes in different sectors coinciding in a week of intensive industrial action.

November 24, 25 and 30 will see 70,000 University and College Union (UCU) members on strike alongside 115,000 Royal Mail workers. The UCU members at around 150 universities are walking out over pay, conditions and pensions.

Also on November 24, around 55,000 teachers in Scotland will walk out, the first such national strike by Educational Institute of Scotland members for around 40 years. They are protesting a derisory pay offer. They voted by 96 percent for the stoppage. Two further days of strikes will be announced at a later date.

On November 26, around 6,000 train drivers at 12 train operating companies will hold a further stoppage in their campaign for a significant pay rise. Many have not had a pay rise since 2019. Talks over pay were taking place, but the companies have not made an offer that ASLEF can sell to its membership.

The companies affected are Avanti West Coast, Chiltern Railways, Cross Country, East Midlands Railway, Great Western Railway, Greater Anglia, London North Eastern Railway, London Overground, Northern Trains, Southeastern, Transpennine Express and West Midlands Trains.

Workers at biscuit manufacturer in Liverpool, England escalate to all-out strike over pay

Around 700 UK workers at the Jacob’s biscuit and cracker factory in Aintree, Liverpool, who took intermittent strikes since September, escalated the action to an all-out stoppage over pay at the beginning of November.

The company upped its previous pay offer to an 8.9 percent pay increase plus a one-off £500 lump sum. The company wants the offer to be put to a vote of the workforce. Meanwhile, to meet the demand for its products in the run-up to Christmas, it outsourced some production to a company in Portugal.

Strike by UK offshore oil maintenance workers over pay

Around 150 UK employees at oil and gas maintenance company Petrofac began a 48-hour strike Wednesday. They are also imposing an overtime ban.

The Unite union members work on offshore rigs in the North Sea around Scotland and at the Flotta oil terminal on Orkney. They rejected a three percent pay offer from the company.

The workers involved in the dispute are employed as deck crew, pipe fitters, riggers and safety technicians.

UK firefighters vote for strike ballot over pay

UK firefighters in a consultative ballot indicated they wish to ballot for strike action, having rejected a five percent pay offer. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) members voted by a 79 percent majority to reject the pay offer. A postal ballot for industrial action will run from December 5 until January 23.

Overtime ban by firefighters in Merseyside, UK over introduction of new shift system

Firefighters in Merseyside, England voted by an 88 percent majority to impose an overtime ban from December 1 for six months.

The FBU members oppose the introduction of a new duty shift system, a cut in the number of staff in overnight control rooms to five and other issues.

After a majority of FBU members rejected a five percent pay offer in a national consultative ballot, the union will proceed to a substantive national strike ballot.

Uber drivers in Leicester, UK hold intermittent strikes over takeaway food deliveries

Around 100 Uber drivers in Leicester, England are holding intermittent stoppages over fast food deliveries.

The drivers organised via a WhatsApp group refuse to take some calls from food outlets to deliver takeaways. They took the action over the decreasing amount being paid to them for deliveries. The action led to some food orders not being delivered.

Further strikes by UK postal workers announced

Forty-eight hours strikes by UK postal workers are to take place on November 24 and November 30.

The dates of the strikes cover the busy Black Friday and Cyber Monday periods for online ordered goods. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) members are continuing their campaign for improved pay and against attacks on their jobs and conditions.

There will also be sectional strikes by postal workers. Administrative, collection, distribution, international and processing workers will walk out on November 15 and 24 and December 1. Delivery workers will strike on November 16 and 25 and December 2. Network staff will walk out on November 23 and 30.

Around 115,00 postal workers took eight days of stoppages against an imposed two percent pay increase and plans to attack jobs and conditions

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to render Royal Mail a gig economy outfit.

The CWU bureaucracy tried to sabotage the campaign by cancelling days of rolling strike action after a legal challenge by Royal Mail. Their action provoked anger at an online meeting of CWU postal workers. In response the CWU bureaucracy issued a communique calling for "a de-escalation of tension to avoid flashpoints and restoring calmness in the workplace."

UK rail workers vote to continue programme of strikes over pay, conditions and job cuts

UK rail workers voted by a 90 percent majority on a 70 percent turnout to continue their programme of stoppages.

Under trade union law, after six months of dispute with no resolution, members have to reballot to continue their action. The Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members work for Network Rail and the 14 train operating companies.

The RMT union bureaucracy recently called off planned stoppages by 40,000 rail workers to enter "intense negotiations" with the government and rail companies, which demand a major restructuring involving attacks on jobs, pensions and safety.

Scottish ambulance staff to strike over pay offer

Scottish ambulance staff are to hold a one-day strike on November 28.

The GMB members are protesting the five percent pay offer from the Scottish National Party-controlled government. Unite union members working for the Scottish Ambulance Service will begin a work to rule from November 25 over the same issue.

UK health unions meet with Conservative government Health Secretary ahead of possible strike action

Nurses in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland recently voted to strike against a 5.5 percent pay offer. They are demanding an above-inflation pay deal.

On Tuesday, Tory Health Secretary Steve Barclay met leaders of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), Unite, Unison, GMB, the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Physiotherapists with members in the health service, who are being balloted for industrial action over pay.

The BBC reported Barclay saying he would continue to speak to the unions. He said, "My door remains open and we will continue to meet."

According to a November 15 *Daily Telegraph*report, secret talks took place between leaders of the RCN, Unite, Unison, GMB, the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Physiotherapists on Monday. The meeting was ostensibly to coordinate action should strikes go ahead.

Teachers in sixth-form colleges across England vote to strike over pay

Around 4,000 teachers at 77 sixth-form colleges (ages 16-18) in England voted to strike over pay.

The National Education Union (NEU) members voted by more than 88 percent to walk out on a 63 percent turnout. The first stoppage will take place November 30.

NEU members in schools are balloting for strikes over pay, but the ballot runs until January 13. The NASUWT teachers' union and school leaders' union NAHT are also carrying out ballots over pay. The other school leaders' union the ASCL announced it will ballot its members following the Chancellor's autumn statement.

UK Environment Agency staff vote to strike over pay

Workers employed by the UK government Environment Agency (EA) voted to strike to reject a two percent pay offer plus a one-off £345 payment.

Around 2,800 Unison union members voted by over 70 percent to walk out. It would be the first strike by EA staff in the organisation's 26-year history. EA workers are responsible for managing the risk from flooding and maintaining coastal defences. Chronic low pay by the agency led to large numbers of staff leaving, putting extra pressure on those left.

Chemical workers at Consett, UK to strike over pay offer

Around 100 workers employed at Thomas Swan in Consett in England announced they will walk out over pay.

The GMB members voted by more than 92 percent to reject a 5.1 percent pay offer capped at £1,000. Five 24-hour strikes were announced for November 30, December 7, 14 and 21 and January 4.

Thomas Swan is an independent chemical company founded in 1926, exporting to 80 countries around the world. It produced hand sanitiser products during the lockdown stage of the pandemic.

Grounds maintenance workers at Welwyn Hatfield borough council, England to strike over pay

UK grounds maintenance staff working for outsourced company, Continental Landscapes are to strike over pay.

The Unite union members are employed by Continental Landscapes, contracted to maintain grounds on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield borough council in England. They are currently paid £10.12 an hour and were only offered a seven percent pay rise.

The workers will walk out on November 21 and 22 and then each Monday and Tuesday until December 13.

Strike of bus drivers in Hull, UK ends as workers accept new company offer

The all-out strike by around 250 drivers, engineers, cleaners and customer assistants at UK bus company Stagecoach in Hull is over, as

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workers accepted a new company offer.

The strike, begun October 7, was suspended by the Unite union on November 7 for the workforce to consider the company's new offer.

Drivers were demanding an increase from £11.14 an hour to £13, with the same percentage increase passed on to all staff. They rejected the claim by the largest bus and coach operator in the UK that this is unaffordable. Their demand is viewed as a step towards parity with drivers at Stagecoach Merseyside, who are on £14 an hour.

A Unite union press release of November 11 claimed the two-year deal was worth 20 percent. It noted, "The phased pay deal will see drivers pay increase to £12.50 (backdated to May 2022), £13 from December 2022, £13.25 from May 2023 and £13.50 from December 2023. Workers in other roles will receive equivalent percentage increases over the same period."

GMB union suspends strike of refuse collection workers at Waverley, UK

The GMB suspended the three-week strike of refuse workers in Waverley, England, begun November 3.

The workers are employed by outsourcing company Biffa to provide bin collections on behalf of Waverley Borough Council. The GMB announced a "breakthrough" in talks but gave no details of the deal.

Unite union calls off strike of Tyne and Wear, UK light rail engineers as workers accept new pay offer

A two-week strike by around 50 engineers employed by Stadler Rail Service Ltd on the Tyne and Wear Metro light rail system in England, due to start Monday, was called off by Unite as workers accepted a new pay offer.

They rejected a four percent pay rise from Stadler, which posted profits of £119 for 2021.

According to a Unite press release of November 14, the deal, "includes a much-improved offer for pay and allowances, which will be backdated to January, a £1,000 one-off payment and boosts to overtime rates and health benefits."

Unite suspends strike by light rail workers at UK's West Midlands Metro over pay as company makes new offer

Strikes by 176 UK workers employed on the West Midlands Metro, which runs a light rail service between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, England were suspended by Unite.

Strikes planned for Wednesday to Friday were cancelled. Workers first walked out on October 15 and planned 53 stoppages until January 5. They voted by an 86 percent majority on an 84 percent turnout for the action. The tram workers seek a minimum £27,000 for drivers and customer representatives and an additional £5,000 a year for other grades.

Talks brokered by the government mediation service Acas resulted in a new pay offer from the company, which is being put to the workers. Should it be rejected, strikes scheduled for next week and beyond will proceed.

Middle East

Protests and strikes over death of Iranian Mahsa Amini enter ninth week, spurred by commemoration of 2019 massacre

Workers, students and small businesses in Iran began a three-day strike Tuesday, to commemorate the "Bloody Aban" protests three years ago.

The 2019 protests were triggered by a sharp rise in fuel prices and increasing poverty. The security forces reacted with lethal force, killing over 300 protestors. Many of those who died were from the Arab province of Khuzestan.

The commemorative protests linked up with the ongoing protests over the killing of Mahsa Amini by state forces. The 22-year-old was arrested by the morality police for wearing the hijab "improperly." The police are accused of attacking her, resulting in her admission to hospital, where she fell into a coma and died three days later.

Among workers taking action were those from Iran's largest steel producer the Esfahan Steel Company. Students in Tehran joined in the action, as did traders in the Grand Bazaar in the capital city. The Bazaar traders had been regarded as key supporters of the clerical state's ruling elite.

Human rights groups state around 320 people including children were killed in the ongoing protests over the death of Amini, now in their ninth week. They also state around 15,000 people were arrested during the protests.

Africa

Public servants in South Africa plan further strike over pay

Public servants throughout South Africa will walk out at the National Treasury in Pretoria and eight other provinces on Tuesday. They have not had a pay increase for three years.

A one-day strike was held November 10, to demand a 10 percent pay increase against government plans to impose three percent. Workers in Gauteng, KZN, Western Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga are among those who took strike action. Workers from the Health Service supported pickets at lunchtime.

Four other public sector unions—the National Education, Health, and Allied Workers Union, the Police, Prisons and Civil Rights Union, the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa and the Health and Other Services Personnel Trade Union of SA—are now balloting members to strike.

Workers' pay stoppage at 21 nature reserves in Mpumalanga, South Africa

Workers employed at 21 nature reserves by Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency began strike action last week, over wage rises for 2022-23.

The strike by National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union members closed both offices and nature reserves throughout Mpumalanga.

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Staff at Bayero University, Nigeria strike against salary cut following end of long-running lecturers' strike

Staff members at Bayero University at Kano (BUK) in Nigeria held a one-day "academic free day" and protest on November 16.

Nigeria's university lecturers walked out from February 14 until September 21, when the National Industrial Court issued a ruling demanding an end to the strike, with which the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) complied. Lecturers demanded better salaries and funding, and an end to problems with payroll software causing years of late payment of salaries.

Vice-chairperson of the ASUU, BUK branch, Dr. Sagir Saleh told the media, "We have called off the [long-running] strike because of the court order and the intervention of the speaker of the house of representatives. The promise was that all our entitlement would be paid but… the Federal government decided to pay half salary for the month of September." He said the ASUU at BUK would plan more actions that would cause harm to the "system" if the warning strike was ignored.

The stoppage caused the university to reschedule all its academic activities and ongoing examinations. The National Association of Medical and Dental Academics admitted its members were suffering the same persecution as those of the ASUU but disassociated itself from the protest.

Ghanaian haulage drivers hold sit-down strike over exorbitant fuel costs

Haulage drivers at Tema Main Harbour in Ghana began a sit-down strike on November 16 to oppose their "unbearable" working conditions, demanding reductions in the price of diesel.

Shamsu Baba Yaro, Vice Chairman, Joint Association of Point Transport Union (JAPTU), said drivers involved in haulage transport were hit hard by changes in the economy. While drivers in Ghana played an integral role in keeping the country functioning, they pay huge sums for fuel, much more than in neighbouring west African countries. "One needs GH¢5,300 to purchase six drums of fuel in Ghana for a cross-country journey but elsewhere… you need 1.6 million CFA, equivalent to GH¢2,500, to buy the same quantity of fuel in other West African countries," he said.

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