

Workers at retail giant Amazon's warehouses in Italy and Germany stop work during the company's "Prime Day" promotion event; general strike across occupied West Bank in response to Israeli genocidal assault on Gaza; teachers march in Durban, South Africa to protest cost of living crisis

## 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.*

Workers at retail giant Amazon's warehouses in Italy and Germany stopped work during the company's "Prime Day" promotion event.

According to *PiacenzaSera*, after the initial stoppage of more than 100 workers on October 11 at the warehouse in Castel San Giovanni, workers continued to walk out for an hour in each of the morning and afternoon shifts on October 17. Italian Amazon workers oppose the company's pay offer for this year, a mere 1.1 percent.

At four warehouses in Germany, Amazon workers also joined strikes called by the United Services Union (Verdi) on October 10 and 11. Verdi has called a series of short warning strikes for years, appealing to Amazon to join the same collective bargaining agreement as the rest of the retail and mail-order sector.

### Early years professionals hold national strike in France against understaffing and deteriorating conditions

On Thursday, workers from crèches across France joined a national strike, called by the "No babies in lockers" collective and the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) union.

Early years professionals are calling for an increase in staffing levels, to have one caregiver per five children, while the current standard is one adult for six children.

The "No babies in lockers" group also called for more qualified staff to be hired, "an immediate end to recruitment of staff with neither qualifications nor experience," and more continued professional training for all workers.

Protests took place in over 30 cities across France. One protesting worker told *actu*, "We want to spend time with the child and watch over their development. We're not just here to feed them." Another added, "Children are children and not file numbers."

### Hundreds of migrant workers preparing Olympics in France demand regularisation

Around 500 "sans papiers" migrant workers in France stopped work on Tuesday and occupied many workplaces across the construction sector and other sectors preparing the Olympics in Paris next year, *Le Figaro* reported.

The workers are employed by subcontractors of major companies without receiving documents to allow them to apply for residency or work permits, so are exploited and underpaid, according to the CGT and National Workers' Confederation-Workers' Solidarity unions, which have made statements on behalf of the strikers.

Workers told the media they would continue the occupation until they received residency and work permits from their employers, and said, according to *Reuters*, "No papers, no Olympic Games."

They are also opposed to the draft immigration bill proposed by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, a sympathiser of the far-right Action Française who has made racist denunciations of halal and kosher food aisles. The bill would make it easier to deport migrants and increase the barriers to obtaining long-term permits, while creating an insecure workforce in low-paid sectors such as hospitality, cleaning and construction by introducing a one-year residence permit for jobs where there is a labour shortage.

### Childcare workers in Spain hold national strike over pay and conditions

Up to 80,000 childcare workers began a one-day national strike in Spain on Thursday, called by the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) union in public and private nurseries. Three more 24-hour national strikes are planned on October 25 and November 8 and 15.

*Europa Press* reports that a previous partial strike took place in June, to call for pay rises and secure contracts. The CCOO said pay in the sector has been frozen since September 2021, and that workers are regularly

hired in September and then fired at the start of the summer in June.

### **Strike at Czech universities against low and unequal salaries**

Academics, other university workers and students in the Czech Republic walked out on Tuesday afternoon, with the organisers estimating that thousands would join protests across the country. Protestors demanded pay rises and denounced the massive variation in salaries between universities and departments.

According to *denik.cz*, salaries in humanities and social science departments are less than half the average university salary, and the differences between universities were also huge. The Ministry of Education insisted that the government could not intervene as universities were responsible for setting their own pay policies.

classes to 30 minutes until the government agreed to raise the salary of workers in schools to the national average.

One of the four unions involved told *Nova.rs* that the deal they signed was a “millimetre step” towards education workers’ demands but the “maximum” they could achieve. The deal was denounced by the Forum of Belgrade High Schools (FBG), which represents teachers in the capital, for postponing the key demand of raising wages until January 2025.

Since the government is discussing calling new elections in December this year, the FBG wrote in a statement that “it is now futile to interpret the signed Protocol as an obligation of every subsequent Government to respect it, because the basic question we ask the big four [teachers’ unions] is what mechanisms it proposes in the event that a new Government... not to respect what was signed.”

According to *Nova.rs*, the “protocol” signed by the unions claims the government’s pay rises for educators amounted to 31 percent in one year. This is not accurate, as it counts pay rises in both January 2023 and the planned increase in January 2024, so could cover a whole two-year period and leave starting pay still far below the national average salary.

### **Polish postal workers hold warning strike**

Workers at the Polish state-owned postal company Poczta Polska held a two-hour warning strike on October 11, during collective bargaining negotiations. One union, quoted by *Wyborcza.biz* said, “We are very pleased with the attitude of the thousands of employees who were ready to join or joined the warning strike.”

Poczta Polska claimed it could not afford to raise monthly salaries by 800 z?oty, which the unions calling the stoppage demanded. The PP Employees’ Trade Union said the company withheld financial information from the last eight months, *Rzeczpospolita* reported. According to the unions, 70 percent of Poczta Polska’s 60,000 employees are paid the minimum wage.

### **Airport staff at UK’s Humberside Airport strike over pay**

Airport staff at Humberside Airport, England held a 24-hour strike which began on Tuesday.

The Unison union members who work as cleaners, firefighters, refuellers, security staff and in the airport travel shop are seeking an improved pay offer. Tuesday’s strike is to be followed by a 48-hour stoppage beginning October 31 and a 72-hour walkout from November 14.

### **Protesting construction workers receive severance and overtime pay after defying arrests and intimidation in Istanbul, Turkey**

Six construction workers in the Ata?ehir municipality of Istanbul, Turkey, received the severance pay and overtime they were owed on Wednesday, after a week of protests and work stoppages.

They were working for a subcontractor to Limak Holding, which is building a bank branch in the district. Limak initially claimed no responsibility for the withheld payments, claiming it was the subcontractor’s responsibility, but eventually agreed to ensure they were paid.

When they picketed Limak’s head office last week, the six were attacked first by private security, and then the workers and two union officials were detained by police.

### **Strike by housing repair staff at Scottish local authority over money owed**

Around 240 craft workers employed by West Lothian council in Scotland began a three-day stoppage Tuesday.

The Unite union members who work as bricklayers, electricians, joiners, plasterers and in other trades walked out after the council refused to abide by a long-standing collective agreement to pay the workers extra for carrying out additional tasks.

The workers are responsible for carrying out repairs in council houses and buildings as well as refitting houses.

### **Support staff at special needs school in Leicester, UK continue stoppages over pay**

Around 90 UK support staff at the Ashfield Academy, Leicester for children aged four to 19 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are continuing their strike.

The Unison union members’ latest action was due to end October 11. The current action will mean strikes each day apart from two dates until December 1. They voted by an 85 percent majority to continue their action over pay.

The Unison members have held stoppages since the dispute began in May 2023. The staff at the government-funded but privately run academy

### **Serbian teachers’ unions call off strike, sign non-binding “protocol” with government**

Last week, the four unions representing school workers in Serbia called off the indefinite partial strike due to begin this Monday after signing an agreement with the government. The stoppage would have shortened all

school include teaching assistants, administration workers and residential staff.

Their demands are for a £3,000 pay increase to bring them into line with other SEND schools run by Leicester local authority, introduction of a pay scale to align them with workers performing comparable roles and a pay supplement for staff taking on additional medical responsibilities.

### **Strikes by teachers at London school against academy plans**

Around 50 teachers at the Connaught School for Girls in London were set to walk out for three days from Tuesday.

The National Education Union (NEU) members oppose plans for the school to be taken over by a multi-academy trust. They voted by a near 90 percent majority for the stoppages., following three days of strikes last week. A further three-day stoppage is planned for October 31.

The NEU members have been in dispute over academisation plans for two years, striking for six days in July over the same issue.

### **Education ancillary workers in Northern Ireland to begin work to rule over promised pay and regrading review**

Workers employed by the Northern Ireland Education Authority are to begin a work to rule on October 23.

The Unite union members, who work as school assistants, caterers, cleaners and in administration and school transport are protesting the Education Authority's failure to carry out a pay and regrading review promised last year. They voted by an over 95 percent majority for the work to rule.

The Unite union members will join GMB union members, who begin a work to rule the same day. Unison members are already carrying out a work to rule and NIPSA union members are expected to join in.

### **Scottish ancillary school staff vote to reject latest pay offer and hold rolling programme of strikes**

Around 20,000 school ancillary staff across Scotland voted by a near 90 percent majority to reject the latest pay offer from the employers' body, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Cosla).

The Unison union members, who work as caterers, cleaners, janitors and support workers, want £15 an hour pay. They will mount rolling strikes across Scotland over the coming weeks. Unison has yet to set dates for the action.

They previously held a three-day stoppage beginning September 26 over the same issue. They were due to be joined by GMB and Unite union members, but the unions cancelled the strikes while their members voted on the offer rejected by the Unison members. The GMB and Unite union members accepted Cosla's offer.

### **Scottish Water workers' strike vote over pay and new grading system**

Around 500 Scottish Water workers voted by an 89 percent majority to strike.

The Unite union members are seeking higher pay and reject a new grading system imposed on the workforce. The newly appointed CEO of Scottish Water reportedly has a £295,000 salary. No dates have been announced for stoppages.

### **Distillery workers at Scottish firm in strike ballot over rejected pay offer**

Distillery workers employed by French-owned Chivas Brothers in Scotland are to ballot for strike action over a 6.4 percent pay offer that was rejected by the workers.

The GMB members voted by a 97 percent majority in a consultative vote for a strike ballot. Chivas produces Chivas Regal whisky and other brands, employing around 1,600 at sites across Scotland, including the Kilmalid bottling plant in Dumbarton and the Strathclyde Grain Distillery among others. Unite union members at Chivas will also ballot.

### **Oil platform service engineers at Scottish firm to ballot over pay offer**

Around 90 workers employed by Port of Rosyth-based Oceaneering International Services Limited in Scotland are holding a ballot for strike action after rejecting a 6 percent pay offer.

The ballot of Unite union members, begun Wednesday, closes November 8. The Texas-based company provides engineering services and products to the offshore oil and gas industry.

### **Bus drivers at First Glasgow, Scotland ballot for strike action over pay**

Around 1,000 bus drivers in Scotland working for First Glasgow (No1) and First Glasgow (No2) are balloting for strike action after rejecting an unsatisfactory pay offer.

The Unite union members want a pay rise to bring them in line with bus drivers working for First Group in other First companies across the UK. They rejected the companies' offer by a 99 percent majority.

The ballot closes on November 7, and any stoppages are expected later that month. Around 150 engineers at the two companies are also in dispute over the pay offer. First Glasgow (No1) reported its latest profits at nearly £4 million, while First Glasgow (No2) reported profits of more than a third of a million. The two companies have depots at Blantyre, Caledonia, Dumbarton, Overtown and Scotstoun.

### **General strike across occupied West Bank in response to Israeli onslaught of Gaza**

A general strike took place across the occupied West Bank in Israel on Wednesday. It was in response to the ongoing Israeli genocidal assault on the people of Gaza, and particularly the death of 500 when the Al-Ahli

Baptist hospital in Gaza City was hit.

The strike led to the closure of shops, markets, universities, businesses and factories. Public transport came to a halt, and Palestinian flags across the territory flew at half-mast.

### **Palestinian trade unions call for arming of Israel to be stopped**

In a statement issued Monday, more than 30 Palestinian trade union organisations called for an end to arming Israel.

Unions including the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, Gaza, the General Union of Municipal Workers, the General Union of Palestinian Teachers, the Medical Association-Jerusalem Centre, the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, the Palestinian Postal Services Workers Union, the Palestinian General Union of Writers and the Federation of Health Professionals Syndicates called on "trade unions in relevant industries" to:

"refuse to build weapons destined for Israel... refuse to transport weapons to Israel... take action against complicit companies involved in implementing Israel's brutal and illegal siege, especially if they have contracts with your institution [and] pressure governments to stop all military trade with Israel, and in the case of the US, funding to it."

They made their appeal in the face of "attempts to ban and silence all forms of solidarity with the Palestinian people," saying the call was made "in the belief that the struggle for Palestinian justice and liberation is not only a regionally and globally determined struggle. It is a lever for the liberation of all dispossessed and exploited people of the world."

On Sunday, an *Al Jazeera* report highlighted the plight of Palestinians living and working in Israel being suspended from their jobs or school and university places for previous postings on social media or conversations with colleagues expressing support for Palestinians in Gaza.

*International Middle East Media Centre* reported last week that around 600 Gazans working in Israel were rounded up and forcibly expelled into the West Bank, leaving them isolated from their families in Gaza.

Around 4,000 Gazan workers, who had crossed into Israel with permits to work in Israel in the week before the Hamas-led insurgency into Israel, were arrested and held for questioning by Israeli authorities.

### **Hundreds of teachers march in Durban, South Africa to demand cost of living payments**

Hundreds of schoolteachers marched to Durban City Hall, South Africa on October 13 to hand a memorandum of demands to the Department of Education.

One of the main demands of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union members is a fast-tracking of staff to fill vacancies. Also, salaries are not keeping up with rising prices, with the result that staffing levels are low. Teachers also told the *Citizen* that schools are no longer safe, as they are seen as easy targets for attack.

Teacher Thandiwe Mkhize, who travelled 380km to join the march, works at a school near the Mozambican border. She told *GroundUp*, "Our school conditions are not good at all. We don't even have security at the gate."

### **Teachers in Marit, Bushbuckridge, South Africa strike in over safety**

Hundreds of South African teachers at over 50 schools in Marit, Bushbuckridge walked out on October 12 in protest at daytime robberies which threaten their safety. Workers demanded their concerns were addressed within 24 hours or they would not return to work.

One striker told *Scrolla*, "We are scared for our lives, criminals enter school premises in daylight holding guns in front of our learners... Imagine the trauma that these kids go through having to watch their teachers being harassed and robbed at gunpoint."

Several schools have had food stolen, reflecting the tense social crisis in the area. At least 10 schools remained on strike this week.

### **High school students protest over lack of basic amenities in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**

High school students who attend Sukuma High boarding school in Mbali Township took to the streets on October 12 to protest the lack of food and electricity. Some parents joined the demonstration, as students blockaded the roads in Imbali with burning trees and furniture. Police responded with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Bhekamambo Mkhize, the School Governing Body chairperson told *Scrolla*, "It's distressing that for two months, our children, especially those in the school residence, have been without food. Moreover, Eskom has cut off electricity due to the department's unpaid bills." He also said students were not taken to the clinic following the tear gas assault.

### **Public servants at South Africa's State Information Technology Agency strike over pay**

Workers at South Africa's State Information Technology Agency (SITA) began lunchtime stoppage and picketing this week to demand a 7.5 percent pay increase.

The Public Services Association members say if the government is not forthcoming, all-out strike action will begin on Monday.

SITA, the government IT service provider for the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the South African Police Service among others, have offered 5 percent. According to various press reports, the SASSA systems are affected and are down.

### **South African food workers in Ekurhuleni strike for pay increase**

South African workers at Pioneer Foods at the Clayville plant in Ekurhuleni walked out for 10 days to demand an 8 percent pay increase. The company, bought for \$1.7bn in 2020 by PepsiCo, is offering 6 percent.

The Agricultural Food and Allied Democratic Workers Union members are also demanding a 15 percent shift allowance, a staff shop, and medical aid for workers' families. The company claims that all other plants have accepted the final pay increase.

### **Electricity workers in Kano, Nigeria strike over pension arrears**

Electricity workers in Kano State, Nigeria walked off the job on October 16, causing a shutdown of the Kano Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO). The action was taken in opposition to the failure to remit their pension payments for the last 72 months.

The National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) members pledged to strike until the pension funds are paid in full. Hundreds demonstrated at KEDCO headquarters against their mistreatment.

North-West Chairman of the union, Malam Ado Riruwai complained that management has been continuously victimising workers and refusing to provide basic medical care as outlined in the workers' contract, "in spite of the hazards associated with their jobs."

Company representatives admitted withholding the pension payments but called on the protestors to be patient, claiming it was all the fault of previous managers. They did not say they would give back the money.

#### **Teachers in Bayelsa State, Nigeria to strike over minimum wage and lack of promotion**

Teachers in Bayelsa State, Nigeria are set to walk out over the non-payment of the N30,000 minimum wage, causing hardship and broken promises on promotions.

An executive meeting of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) called the action on October 12 after an earlier three-day warning strike failed to have any effect. The NUT has now called a 14-day ultimatum, hoping a settlement can be made before the period runs out.

#### **Protesting Kenyan teachers tear-gassed by police**

Kenyan teachers protesting about lack of security were tear-gassed by police outside the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) headquarters in Nairobi.

One protestor shouted, "Why are you denying me from entering this place? I am just presenting my response on the interdiction to the TSC bosses; do not intimidate me!"

Teachers had been asking for transfers from North Eastern Kenya due to a lack of security. The TSC ordered the teachers to report to their workplaces in September despite problems there. The TSC is now threatening to withhold pay for annual leave.



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