

Regional transport workers' strikes in Portugal and Italy; general strike in West Bank cities after weekend slaughter of Palestinians by IDF in Gaza; aviation workers at South African airports on indefinite strike over pay structure

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.

Italy: 4-hour regional transport strike closes metro lines in Milan and Rome

Bus, tram and metro services were disrupted across Italy during a 4-hour national transport strike today. The strike was called by Filt Cgil, Fit Cisl, Ultrasporti, Faisa Cisl and Ugl Fna unions for the renewal of the local public transport contract across the country.

Different strike arrangements were in place regionally. In Milan, which saw morning action, all metro lines were closed. In Rome, also affected in the morning, two of the three metro lines were closed, with the third only partially open. Turin, Florence and Venice were due to see action later in the day.

In Milan, the unions said the strike followed “months of fruitless negotiations” over a national contract for workers who have seen their pay and conditions deteriorate drastically over the years.

Transport strike continues in Lisbon, as national rail workers prepare new strike

Transport workers in the Portuguese capital are continuing a series of rolling strikes over wages and conditions. A 24-hour strike on July 12 that saw participation by 90 percent of STRUP members at Carris, the state-owned bus and tram company in Lisbon, has been followed by a week of partial strikes begun Monday.

The workers are on strike for the first and last two hours of each shift. STRUP's Manuel Leal told *Lusa* this meant services were “strongly” affected, although it was difficult to gauge turnout. However, Leal admitted that under this action “there are always cars circulating.”

The workers are demanding a wage increase, moves towards a 35-hour week to include travel times, and the resumption of the negotiation process, which Leal said was “unilaterally interrupted” by Carris. Carris

have agreed to meet the union on July 23.

Workers at national rail company Combos de Portugal (CP) have announced two more days of strike action over low pay on July 22 and 24. This follows a one-day strike on June 28.

The Federation of Transport and Communications Unions (Fectrans) has accused CP of presenting an “unacceptable proposal” over terms. Having guaranteed that the agreement reached with the unions would cover all workers, CP then made it conditional on accepting a proposal about career regulation.

Members of the SMAQ machinists' union had called a strike between June 27 and July 14, but the union called this off having reached an agreement with CP.

Transport workers at STCP in Porto are to strike from midnight July 21 to 2 a.m. July 23 over wages. The strike is planned for 26 hours to include the night shift.

The STRUM members are demanding a wage increase of not less than 8 percent. STCP imposed wage increases of 2 percent in January and 4.7 percent in April, and did not respond to the call for a pay review.

Performers to strike during Olympic opening ceremony, as French unions call off airport strike

The unions representing Paris airport workers called off a strike planned for July 17 after reaching a “majority deal” with Aeroports de Paris (ADP) on Olympic bonuses.

The CFDT, CFE-CGC and CGT all agreed to a uniform 300 euro bonus to be paid to all ADP employees in September. Daniel Bertone of the CGT said the company had responded to union calls for a uniform bonus, even if “the amount could have been better.”

Meanwhile the SFA-CGT has called a strike of performers to coincide with the opening ceremony of the Olympics on July 26. They are protesting exploitative and unfair contracts for performers at the ceremony.

Some 3,000 performers are contracted for the event by producer Paname 24. The union accuses the company of “contractual policies not in accordance with the collective agreement” for artistic and cultural companies.

They accuse Paname 24 of recruiting dancers “under shameful conditions.” Bernard Thibault, former CGT leader, said the provisions had only been discovered when dancers started showing them their contracts “and we discovered that the clauses were not normal.”

They cited wide disparities in pay and conditions, with some casual workers being paid 60 euros while performers covered by collective agreements are receiving 1,610 euros. The union notes that while some non-Parisian performers will receive pay and lodging, the most precarious workers will not.

The Games organisers say they are satisfied with Paname 24’s contractual legal compliance. Thibault said some performers would lose money working at the ceremony. It is a real professional opportunity, he said, but that does not mean “the work done should not be recognised.”

French delivery drivers in one-day strike against new pay cuts

On Sunday, July 14, French drivers for delivery platforms came out on strike to protest a new reduction in their pay, holding demonstrations across the country.

Last month, a modification of the algorithm applied by platforms like Uber Eats and Deliveroo reduced the rate paid to drivers. Christophe Rabussier of the CFDT, which called the strike, told *France Bleu* that a 5km trip now pays the driver only 5 euros.

The CFDT is calling on the platforms to reopen negotiations over tariffs to improve pay and take night and holiday work into account.

General strike in Locris, Greece in defence of sacked Larco metallurgy workers

Workers took part in a general strike in Locris, Greece on Wednesday in support of workers dismissed from metallurgy company Larco.

Workers from 20 unions participated, some travelling from Athens and miners from Halkidi, reported *Ef syn*. A rally was held at the Larco factory in Larymna, and a large demonstration blocked the national highway.

State-owned Larco produced ferro-nickel with several mines and a smelting factory since 1968. The bulk of employees were employed at the Larymna factory and were resettled in the area after it opened. The ore is used in the production of stainless steel.

The conservative New Democracy government, which has just introduced a six-day working week after over a decade of austerity first implemented by Syriza (Coalition of the Radical left), has not found a buyer for Larco.

Union trying to push through inferior employers’ proposals after German port workers go on warning strike over pay

Workers at the German ports of Bremen, Bremerhaven and Emden went on warning strikes last week for up to two days ahead of union/employer talks over pay. Port workers at Hamburg previously walked out for two days over the same collective agreement.

The 11,000 Verdi union members put in for a wage rise of 3 euros an hour, plus an increase in shift allowances.

After meeting with the Central Association of Seaports (ZDS) on July

11, Verdi is presenting workers with a choice of two offers from the ZDS—either an increase of 0.95 euros an hour plus a one off 1,000-euro payment and increase in shift allowance, or 1.15 euros an hour increase for 16 months and a one-off 1,400 euros plus shift allowance increase.

German state daycare workers in Berlin in week-long stoppage over staff shortages

Around 1,000 state-employed daycare educators demonstrated in front of the Berlin House of Representatives on July 12, after a week-long stoppage.

The Verdi and GEW union members are demanding an end to staff shortages and better staff training to improve quality of care and end high staff turnover.

The state-run daycare centres, which look after 35,000 children, comprise 10 percent or about 290 of the 2,900 daycare centres in Berlin.

Nurses go on warning strike at Sana Clinic in Lichtenberg, Germany over pay

Nurses at the Sana Clinic in Lichtenberg, Germany went on a warning strike on July 9-10 to demand a wage increase of 12 percent.

The 350 Verdi union members held a demonstration on the second day of the stoppage against the Sana Group’s offer of 4 percent.

Mechanics at Tesla in Sweden continue eight-month strike over union recognition

The mechanics’ strike at US-based electric carmaker Tesla begun eight months ago in Sweden is continuing, and a boycott of Tesla is growing. Seven workers are involved in the stoppage in Malmö, and 30 nationally.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk refuses to recognise the IF Metal union and engage in collective bargaining. Tesla said unions were not part of the “the company concept.” According to the *Equal Times*, the company brought 23 unqualified scabs from abroad to replace the workers.

The mechanics complain about exhausting work conditions, including working on five cars a day, and one worker being summarily dismissed for striking. IF Metal, however, wants a corporatist relationship with Tesla to police the workforce, insisting they aim to create “a situation of order, while avoiding conflict... The agreement guarantees that no one can go on strike to obtain better conditions than those set out in the agreement.”

The strike is supported by workers in Verlanda, who refuse to make Tesla parts. Port workers in Denmark, Norway and Finland also refuse to handle Tesla vehicles.

The United Auto Workers in the US and IG Metall in Germany also want union recognition.

Online casino workers in Georgia walk out over pay and conditions

On July 12, more than 4,000 casino workers at the online casino

Evolution Gambling in Georgia went on strike to demand higher wages and better conditions, reported *Civil Georgia*.

According to the Trud trade union, 476 workers and a top manager took part in a protest outside company headquarters in Tbilisi, with solidarity from local spar workers and musicians, as well as employees not on strike.

A further demand was the dismissal of managers for “sexist, racist and discriminatory statements and treatment,” *OC media* reported.

The company is the Georgian subsidiary of Swedish multinational Evolution, which employs 16,000 across Europe and North America. Around 8,000 are employed in Georgia, mainly students trying to make ends meet.

Norwegian IT workers’ strike ends with new collective agreement

An ongoing strike by more than 300 IT workers in Norway has been ended after a new agreement between employers and the EL og IT union.

The members of the EL og IT union work in customer service, development, installation, operation and maintenance of electronic and IT equipment at seven companies, including GlobalConnect, Komplet and Telia. They were covered by a collective agreement that applies to 1,190 workers at 45 companies.

Negotiations over a new collective agreement broke down in May. The workers began their strike June 27 after mediation also broke down. After 13 days of strike action, the company agreed to a general rise of NOK 7 per hour. Minimum wage rates are increased. With six years’ seniority, the minimum starting wage for unskilled workers rises to NOK 31,840, and NOK 37,059 for skilled workers.

The agreement has been sent to members for their approval.

Gardeners at Vigo City Council in Spain begin indefinite strike over index-linked pay rise

Gardeners employed by outsourced company Green Zones UTE on behalf of Vigo City Council in Spain walked out indefinitely on Monday over pay.

Around 50 held a demonstration outside the city hall. Of the 110 workforce, 90 percent are out.

The workers say the company has reneged on a recent agreement to give them a pay rise in line with the consumer price index, *Europa Press* reports.

Strike by job centre security staff in England over pay

Over 1,400 staff employed by security firm G4S to provide security at Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) job centre offices in England began a week-long walkout on Monday.

The GMB and Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members are paid the minimum wage rate of £11.44 an hour. They are demanding a pay rise and an increase in pay grade differential rates. Currently, supervisors are paid only 1p an hour more.

GMB members held several stoppages in May, June and July. They were joined this week by around 200 PCS members who also took part in

joint action in June. The GMB members are scheduled to walk out for a week on July 29.

On Wednesday, the striking security workers held a rally at the Supreme Court, before marching to demonstrate outside DWP and G4S headquarters.

Previous strikes of security staff led to the closure of some job centres over security fears.

Strike by veterinary staff over pay in Wales

Around 100 veterinary staff working for Valley Vets in South Wales began a two-week strike on Tuesday. Valley Vets is part of the VetPartners group.

The British Veterinary Union (BVU) members rejected a derisory pay deal, effective from April 2024. The BVU is a branch of the Unite union. They are employed as veterinary surgeons, nurses, animal care assistants and receptionists.

The stoppage is the first by veterinary workers employed in private practice. The strikers are providing emergency cover throughout the stoppage.

Announcing the stoppage, Unite noted, “Valley Vets has offered its lowest paid staff a derisory pay rise that takes them to slightly above the minimum wage. This is despite 80 per cent reporting that they regularly borrow money to meet basic living costs and five per cent reporting having to use food banks.

“Meanwhile, higher paid workers have been offered increases of between one and 1.5 per cent from April 2024. The offer is real terms pay cut as the RPI rate of inflation was 3.3 per cent when the deal was due to be implemented.”

Unite notes VetPartners made gross profits of over £550 million in 2023, an increase of over £100 million on the previous year. VetPartners has been accused of overcharging pet owners for treatment. Veterinary practices countrywide are currently under a Competitions and Markets Authority investigation into overcharging.

Teachers at secondary school in Nottingham, England strike over job cuts

Teachers at the Trinity Catholic secondary school in Nottingham, England began a two-day stoppage Wednesday.

The National Education Union (NEU) and NASUWT union members were protesting the school’s intention not to replace 10 members of staff due to leave at the end of term. The NEU warned further action could take place next term.

The strike was supported by Dr Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason, matriarch of the Kanneh-Mason classical music family. All her seven children attended the school. She intended to join the picket line with three of her children. She told the *BBC News* website she thought music education at the school was being undermined. She said, “If my children hadn’t gone [to Trinity] they would not have been musicians now, but more than that they wouldn’t have been the people they are now.”

Strike by teachers in London school over working conditions

Teachers at Chingford Foundation secondary school in east London began a three-day stoppage Monday.

The NEU members are protesting the use of fixed term contracts and excessive workloads. They are due to strike again July 22-24.

Teachers and support staff strike at school in Leeds, UK over contract dispute

Around 60 teachers and support staff at the Oulton Academy in Leeds, England were on strike Wednesday. It marked the last of six days of stoppages begun June 28.

The NEU members accuse the school of failing to agree to incorporate national terms and conditions in new and future contracts for teaching staff. The Carlton Academy Trust, which took over the running of the school in April, is seeking to attack terms and conditions for new staff and contracts. It wants to restrict current levels of maternity and sick pay.

Unison union suspends long-running strike by mental health social workers in Barnet, London over retention payments for talks

Around 20 mental health social workers in the north and south mental health teams at Labour-controlled Barnet council in the UK capital returned to work on Monday after a nine-week strike. The Unison union suspended industrial action to allow for talks with the council.

The action, begun in September, saw 81 days of stoppages. Walkouts of various lengths culminated in the continuous strike that ended July 12.

The mental health social work teams are paid 25 percent less than staff who work with children. They have suffered an ongoing turnover of staff, with around 25 leaving in the last two years. Although there were replacements, the high turnover led to a lack of experience within the teams. Unison originally called for a 20 percent retention payment across three mental health teams to address this turnover but reduced this to 10 percent.

In response, the council offered a 5 percent annual salary increase to around 200 staff, including social workers, senior practitioners and occupational therapists. Unison said the 10 percent retention payment for mental health social workers remains a "red line" but suspended the stoppages on the promise of talks alone.

During the recent nine-week strike, Barnet council used the services of recruitment firm Imperium Solutions to cover for strikers. According to *Community Care*, the council argued it was legal and not strike-breaking because, "it had outsourced the service to Imperium Solutions, meaning the authority itself was not engaging agency staff to cover the strike."

Strike of refuse collectors in Armagh, Northern Ireland over "hostile environment"

Environmental services workers employed by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council in Northern Ireland began a two-week strike Wednesday.

The Unite union members based in Armagh are responsible for refuse collection in the borough. They accuse management of creating a "hostile environment," which has seen the dismissal of a shop steward at the

Armagh depot and restricted the access right of five union representatives.

The workers are also opposed to an ongoing "harmonisation" process, part of a review of public administration which is lowering employment terms and conditions.

General strike in occupied West Bank in response to Gaza killings

A general strike took place in several West Bank governorates on Sunday, with most West Bank cities participating. Protests also took place Saturday evening in the cities of Hebron, Jenin and Tubas.

The strike and protests were in response to the mass killings by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in Gaza on Saturday at the designated safe area of al-Mawasi and in a refugee camp west of Khan Younis. The massacre continued Monday, as artillery, drone and airstrikes pounded the Nuseirat, al-Bureij and al-Maghazi refugee camps, and cities Deir al-Balah, Rafah and Gaza City. The IDF also flattened the headquarters of UNRWA, the UN Palestinian relief agency.

Continuing oil strike in Iran alongside other strikes and protests

The strike by Iranian oil contract workers, now in its fourth week, has grown to involve around 24,000 workers across more than 120 companies. Their demands include a 35 percent pay increase, a 14-day rest/work roster, and an end to use of contractors who act as middlemen siphoning money into their own pockets.

Over the last few years, there has been an increased use of contractors in the oil and gas industry replacing directly employed staff. Contracting companies have unsuccessfully tried to break the strike by offering higher wages to contractors willing to take the jobs of those on strike.

There have been reports of protests by so-called third-pillar oil and gas workers, employed on a casual basis. Additionally, formal oil workers (those directly employed) in the Aghajari Oil and Gas Exploitation complex walked out on Sunday and formal workers at the Continental Plateau Company in Lawan held a protest on July 12. Their demands include getting rid of corrupt managers, removal of pay caps and limitations on pensions.

Other strikes and protests are taking place across Iran. Sunday saw protests by retirees from the steel industry and social security service. They took place in cities across the country including Isfahan, Kermanshah, Shush and Tehran. The protestors in Shush also demanded the release of a social activist, Sharifeh Mohammadi, who has been sentenced to death.

Sunday also saw protests by residents in the city of Yasuj in southwest Iran. They gathered outside the provincial government office to protest against severe water shortages.

Last week, the strike of workers at Diba Shushtar Paper and Pulp Industries in Shushtar in Khuzestan province entered its second week. The workers are protesting arrears in wages and benefits.

The laying off of 2,000 workers at the Mammut company which produces containers and trailers led to protests. The 2,000 figure represents around 40 percent of the workforce.

Inflation is at 35 percent and the economy is collapsing, exacerbated by US sanctions. The winner of the recent presidential election, "reform" candidate Masoud Pezeshkian, favours rapprochement with the US. None of the competing factions can answer US war plans against Iran as part of

NATO's widening wars in the Middle East, against Russia in the Ukraine and ultimately China.

Protests in southern Iraq over electricity shortages

Monday saw protests by hundreds of residents of the Al-Shafiyya district of the Al-Diwaniyah Governorate in Iraq. They were protesting deteriorating amenities, particularly electricity supplies. There are frequent disruptions of electricity affecting air conditioning, causing unbearable living conditions when summer temperatures can reach 50 degrees centigrade.

Aviation workers at South African airports on indefinite strike over pay contracts

Workers for multinational airport baggage handling and ground services company Menzies Aviation walked out at five major South African airports Monday, July 15 to protest the pay structure.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa members say many are employed at hourly rates, meaning they are unpaid when sick or on leave—effectively, they are on zero-hour contracts.

Menzies Aviation, which operates at 265 airports in 55 countries, boasts a revenue of \$2.2 billion in 2023.

South African condiment factory workers locked out in wage strike

Almost 100 workers at Ribas condiment and sauce manufacturers in Johannesburg, South Africa have been on protected strike since June 28, demanding a pay rise and a 10-minute tea break. On July 12, they protested outside the factory after the employer implemented a lockout.

The General Industries Union of South Africa members want an increase of R4 an hour. The employer has offered R1.75. The workers currently work 10 hours daily, with one 30-minute lunch break.

Ghanaian union calls for end to stoppage by state employees, accepts further delay to new salary structure

Striking state employees in Ghana were told by the Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana (CLOGSAG) to return to work based on a two-year delay in the implementation of an agreement that should have taken effect in January 2023.

Workers walked out nationally July 3, affecting the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Railways Development, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, and the Ministry of Works and Housing.

The union signed an agreement delaying the implementation to January 2025 without consulting the CLOGSAG members.

Health workers' strike in Oyo State, Nigeria exceeds 60 days

Nurses and midwives in Oyo State, Nigeria are continuing their two-month-long strike to demand better conditions of service.

The strikers put forward a list of eight demands, including that the state administration should urgently recruit more nurses, midwives, and instructors to improve the horrendous work conditions.

Their other demands include improving staff motivation, creating a conducive working atmosphere, raising staff morale, and recruiting more doctors, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and medical laboratory scientists.

Lawyers in Guinea take strike action to oppose repression

A strike by lawyers in Guinea, West Africa, brought courts to a standstill from July 17. The action is a response to arbitrary arrests and detentions by the military regime to suppress a movement calling for an end to military rule.

The bar association stated the lawyers would boycott court sessions for two weeks before returning to work on August 1. That is the day after the trial of the former military ruler Dadis Camara, charged with crimes against humanity.

The military overthrew President Alpha Condé in 2021, in a coup backed by the Union syndicale des travailleurs de Guinée (Trade Union of Guinean Workers, USTG).



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