

German air force engineers and engineers at Mercedes strike over pay and conditions; nurses walk out in Iran over collapsing living standards as retirees' protests continue; pay strike at Mr Sweet in South Africa ends after 11 weeks

## 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.*

### **Construction workers in Patras, Greece attacked by police during national strike for improved pay, benefits and working conditions**

Builders, construction engineers and general labourers went on strike and rallied in protest at towns and cities throughout Greece on Wednesday, calling for a better deal from employers and the government. In Patras, workers were attacked with tear gas by police at their demonstration outside the National Social Security Fund office.

Members of the Federation of Builders of Greece, Association of Technicians, Attica Electronics Union and other union are demanding a Collective Bargaining Agreement to include wage increases, stronger health and safety measures, improved hours and better health insurance and working benefits.

The construction workers fight is part of the mounting anti-austerity strike wave in Greece with a general strike against Kiriakos Mitsotakis's New Democracy government set for November 20.

### **Civilian aircraft engineers working for Germany's military stop work for improved pay and benefits along with thousands of other engineering workers**

Civilian engineering workers, who build and repair jets and helicopters for the German Air Force, began an all-out strike Wednesday at MTU Aero Engines on the Erding military air base near Munich, Germany.

The IG Metall union members are demanding a 7 percent pay increase, an extra €170 a month for trainees and improved child and carers benefits.

According to IG Metall, 10,000 members working at Mercedes Sindelfingen, outside Stuttgart, also held a one-day strike Monday for a 7 percent increase across the sector.

### **Serbian teachers strike nationally for pay increase and improved working conditions**

Teachers across Serbia went on strike to demand higher wages November 1 and hundreds protested in Belgrade outside the government's National Assembly and Ministry of Education.

The Union of Trade Unions of Educational Workers of Serbia and other union members say they will strike again and shorten teaching hours unless they get a pay rise that matches the national average and an improvement in working conditions.

### **Portuguese ambulance drivers and paramedics strike over pay and conditions**

Ambulance workers at government National Institute of Medical Emergency (INEM) centres throughout Portugal went on an overtime strike Monday for a salary increase and a full reassessment of their roles.

The Union of Pre-hospital Emergency Technicians members are understaffed and blame INEM for a lack of resources within the emergency response system, including fire services and emergency call centres.

### **Doctors across Turkey strike over attacks on pay and deteriorating work conditions**

Family health centre doctors across Turkey, with support from nurses and midwives, stopped work for three days beginning Tuesday.

They were protesting a pay reduction of 30 percent, replaced with bonuses according to how many patients are treated per doctor.

The Family Physicians' Associations Federation and Turkish Medical Association members say this prioritises quantity over quality and debases the jobs and security of primary care health practitioners, who are already the lowest paid doctors in Turkey.

### **Turkish factory workers strike for reinstatement of fellow employees**

Around 140 workers at the AS Plastik factory in Istanbul, Turkey have been on strike for over seven weeks after 10 were sacked on spurious grounds.

The workforce was organising for higher wages, overtime pay, and safer working conditions and tried to join a union against the wishes of the employer.

The Petroleum Workers' Union members stopped work September 19 demanding the fired workers' reinstatement.

### **Northern Ireland barristers and solicitors walk out over legal fees**

Barristers and solicitors in criminal cases in Magistrate and Crown Courts in Northern Ireland held a one-day stoppage Monday.

The Criminal Bar Association members are protesting the rates paid for legal aid in criminal cases. According to the association, levels of aid have fallen by between 47 and 58 percent since 2005 when adjusted for inflation.

The Northern Ireland Law Society representing solicitors stated the low levels of legal aid meant solicitors could not afford to take criminal cases and could result in the collapse of the criminal justice system.

### **Healthcare assistants at UK hospitals in Herefordshire strike over pay grading**

More than 200 UK healthcare assistants (HCAs) employed by East and North Herefordshire NHS Foundation Trust at its Lister, Hereford County and QE11 hospitals began a three-day stoppage Wednesday.

The Unison union members, who work as clinical support workers voted by a 97 percent majority for the stoppage. They were paid on the NHS Agenda for Change pay scale at band 2, despite performing duties such as taking bloods and inserting cannulas. They should have been paid on band 3. It meant them losing around £2,000 a year.

The trust agreed they should on band 3 but is only prepared to backdate pay to January 2023 plus a lump sum depending on length of service. The HCAs are demanding backpay for several years in line with that granted by other hospital trusts.

A further three-day stoppage is planned.

### **Workers' unrest over collapsing living standards continues across Iran**

Strikes by nurses across Iran continued Monday, with stoppages in Ardabil, Birjand, Bushehr, Shush and Zanjan.

Issues include pay, compulsory overtime and excessive workloads. The nurses in Zanjan also announced a three-day walkout later in the week. Nurses in South Khorasan province are protesting not being paid mandatory overtime payments for the last three months as well as arrears

of other payments.

The ongoing nurses' strikes are impacting health provision with hospitals in Yazd reportedly on the verge of collapse and only providing emergency care.

Also on Monday, Telecommunications Company of Iran retirees held protests over their inadequate pensions. Rallies were held in several cities including Bijar, Isfahan, Ilam and Tabriz.

In Tehran retirees of the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting company protested over pension levels which leave them struggling.

Creditors of the state-run Maskan Melli housing company were out on the streets in Zanjan. They have waited for five years for promised housing despite making large downpayments.

The Iranian state has sentenced three construction workers to two years in prison. Their "crime" was to protest against working conditions.

The collapse in living conditions, exacerbated by US sanctions, is worsening as the US and Israel escalate war preparations against Iran.

### **Pay strike at Mister Sweet in Germiston South Africa ends after 11 weeks**

The 11-week strike at Mister Sweet in Germiston, South Africa has ended after workers reluctantly accepted a 7 percent pay offer.

Around 385 out of 602 Simunye Workers Forum (SWF) members initially rejected a 7 percent pay offer negotiated by the United Chemical Industries Mining Electrical State Health and Allied Workers Union. Workers were demanding R,12,500 a month and R16,500 for higher level staff. Owner Premier Foods refused to recognise the SWF, a new union.

The SWF justified the climbdown with reference to outstanding school bills, rent arrears and the approach of the festive season.

To break the strike, the company employing unqualified casuals, four of whom lost fingers in what is a hazardous occupation. It also induced 150 strikers to go back to work at another plant in Manhattan.

Premier's revenue grew 3.6 percent last year, from R17.9 billion to R18.6 billion in March.

### **Strike and protest by workers on public works scheme demanding permanent jobs, in Johannesburg, South Africa**

Around 200 South Africa workers on the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) at Pikitup walked out on Tuesday and demonstrated outside the mayor's office in Johannesburg.

The EPWP was set up in 2003, supposedly to help the unemployed develop skills and find work. Workers are employed as cheap labour in areas like environment and culture, social support and infrastructure projects. Many are on six or twelve-month contracts, repeatedly renewed for 10 years.

### **Unions suspend Nigerian university staff's strike over pay**

The unions have suspended the month-long pay strike by university staff begun October 28.

The Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities and the Non-academic Staff Union of Educational and Allied Institutions members

walked out over four months' unpaid salaries, which the government agreed to pay in 2022.

The staff members want implementation of the agreement on which they returned to work following a previous strike, which also included a pay rise of between 7 percent (for higher grades) and 10 percent (for lower grades).

On October 29, the Labour Court ruled the strike was “unprotected” and demanded the resumption of talks. The unions then suspended the stoppage despite only one month's salary being paid.

### **Moroccan workers protest law restricting strikes**

A group of demonstrators assembled outside the Moroccan parliament on November 3 to denounce new legal restrictions on the right to strike.

The demonstrators' slogans included, “No to unjust and absurd laws,” and “The right to strike is a universal and constitutional right that must be defended.” The protest was called by the Moroccan Front Against the Strike and Retirement Laws.

### **Ex-employees of Air Namibia demonstrate to demand severance payments**

Former employees of Air Namibia held a demonstration in Windhoek nearly three years after the liquidation of the national airline. The closure of the airline in 2021 left about 600 workers without a job at a time when it was difficult to survive even for those in work.

Acting spokesman Renier Bougard said, “We signed under oath for our severance packages, yet the liquidators continue to delay.” Many of the workers are unable to secure new jobs. At least 10 died since the closure, some of them as a result of suicide.



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