

Mass demonstrations in Catalonia, Spain over housing crisis; strikes and protests continue across Iran over plummeting living standards; workers walk out in Cross State, Nigeria over minimum wage

## 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.*

### Thousands demonstrate for accessible housing and fair rents in Catalonia, Spain

Up to 170,000 people, including 22,000 in Barcelona, demonstrated across the autonomous community of Catalonia, Spain on Saturday in protest over the region's housing crisis.

The demonstrators, convened by the Tenants' Union of Catalonia, are demanding a 50 percent reduction on the maximum rent limit, an end to fixed length contracts, legislation against property speculation, and for empty homes to be brought into residential use.

It is estimated that 400,000 properties in Catalonia are unavailable to local people through their use as tourist rentals, seasonal second homes or other investments. The region has the highest number of evictions in Spain and mortgages are beyond the reach of average paid workers due to rising house prices.

*La Nueva España* reported one protestor saying, "Housing is not a business, it is a right." Another said, "We are slaves to exorbitant house prices. When we lose our job, we lose our home." Further demonstrations and a rent strike are planned.

### Thousands in Netherlands protest cuts in higher education

An estimated 20,000 students, lecturers and support staff marched Monday in The Hague and other cities in the Netherlands, demonstrating against government funding cuts to universities and colleges of a possible €2 billion euros.

The National Union of Students, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences members and other organisations protested the devastating effect of the cuts on education, medical training, technical training and scientific research.

### Teachers in French-speaking Belgium strike against education cuts

Teachers, and other administrative and technical staff, in schools of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, held a strike Tuesday against regional government cuts in education.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions members and other unions complain that they are already understaffed and under-resourced. They now fear job restructuring, open-ended contracts and a general worsening of conditions.

### Prison staff strike over working conditions in overcrowded Belgian prisons

Prison guards at two prisons in Brussels, Belgium engaged in a 24-hour strike Sunday in protest over working conditions. The strike is part of a series by prison staff, set to continue into December.

The General Union of Public Services and Confederation of Christian Trade Unions members say they are overworked, understaffed and put at risk by the overcrowded conditions for prisoners.

### Teachers at some UK sixth-form colleges strike over pay

Around 2,000 teachers in 32 sixth-form colleges across England were on strike Thursday over pay.

National Education Union members at 40 sixth-form colleges were balloted after the recent 5.5 percent pay rise for teachers was not awarded to those in non-academised colleges. The ballot saw a 97 percent vote in favour of a walkout, on a 62 percent turnout. The result gave 32 colleges a mandate for stoppages.

The Sixth Form College Association is asking for a judicial review of the Labour government's awarding of a 5.5 percent pay rise to teachers but excluding those teaching in colleges that do not have academy status. Sixth-form colleges with academy status were given additional funding to pay the rise.

The action by NEU members is the first since the election of the Labour government in July. Further stoppages are planned for December 3-4.

Colleges taking part in the strikes are in Birmingham, Bristol, Bolton, Cambridge, Huddersfield, Hull, London, Manchester and Southampton.

### **Staff at UK housing association in Knowsley strike over pay**

Hundreds of UK staff including call centre workers, maintenance and repair workers employed by Knowsley-based Livv Housing Association walked out Monday, following a strike on November 22.

The Unite and Unison union members rejected a 5 percent pay offer after many years of below-inflation pay rises. Livv Housing has around 13,000 properties in the Merseyside region. It reported reserves of over £110 million in March this year and its CEO is paid around £0.25 million a year.

Unite members are also set to strike from Thursday until Sunday, while Unison members were on strike Tuesday and are due to walk out on Friday. Workers previously struck in October.

### **Strike by UK hospital ancillary staff at East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Trust over outsourcing threat**

Around 350 UK ancillary hospital workers employed by East Suffolk and North Essex (ESNE) NHS trust began a three-week stoppage Monday to oppose the trust's plans to outsource their jobs.

The Unison union members work as cleaners, housekeepers and porters at Colchester hospital and community hospital sites, Aldeburgh and Felixstowe.

Ancillary staff at Ipswich hospital, part of the ESNE Trust, who are employed by outsourcing company, OCS are on inferior conditions. They get less leave and sick pay than their directly NHS employed colleagues, who fear inferior conditions should the outsourcing go ahead.

The workers, who have already held 20 days of stoppages, recently renewed their strike mandate with a more than 98 percent vote on a 76 percent turnout.

The ESNE board was due to announce its decision on outsourcing at a public meeting earlier this month, but now states it will hold a closed meeting on December 5 where the decision will be made.

### **Continuing protests across Iran over poor working and social conditions**

Protests continue across Iran over collapsing living standards.

November 20, workers at the Iran Khodro auto company in Kermanshah province refused to go into work and gathered outside the entrance. They were protesting management reneging on a promise to increase wages made several months ago. This marks the second strike by the workers in recent months.

On Saturday, around 20,000 defrauded creditors of the state-sponsored Rezayat Khodro Tarvat Novin car maker gathered outside a court in Qazvin. The company is accused of taking money from tens of thousands of customers for cars that never materialised. A case against the company is being held at the Qazvin court.

Sunday saw protests by contracted workers at the Gachsaran Oil and Gas Company. They massed outside the company premises to protest working conditions. Among their demands were pay rises, the elimination of contractor companies, freedom to organise and for previously agreed concessions to be implemented.

On Sunday, nurses in around 20 cities across Iran held protests to push demands including a payrise in line with inflation, banning of forced overtime and increased job security. A protest rally took place at Apadana hospital in Ahvaz by medical staff. Their demands were for payment of arrears of wages and an end to delays in treatment for patients.

The same day saw protests in several cities by retirees of the Social Security Organisation against the failure of their pensions to keep up with inflation. The cities involved included Kermanshah, Isfahan, Ahvaz, and Shush.

Iran's unemployment rate was almost 10 percent in 2023. According to the International Monetary Fund, inflation stands at 31.7 percent this year. The collapse in living standards, exacerbated by US sanctions, grows ever worse in the face of US and Israel war preparations against the country.

### **Workers in two-day strike in Cross River state, Nigeria in national dispute over minimum wage**

Workers in Cross River State, Nigeria, walked out for two days from November 28 over the non-implementation of the new N70,000 minimum wage. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) had set the end of November as a deadline for implementation of the new wage.

The NLC and Trade Union Congress limited the strike to one state to prevent unified action across Nigeria getting out of control.

The *legit.ng* website reported, "It was gathered that many state governors are trying to meet the deadline [the end of November]."

### **Ghanaian teachers' union demands a return to work**

Teachers began a strike November 18 in Ghana over delays of more than four years in finalising and implementing improved conditions of service.

The Teachers and Educational Workers' Union in Ghana has instructed its members to return to work, after the National Labour Commission on behalf of the government demanded an end to the stoppage and the resumption of talks.

### **Protests in Johannesburg, South Africa over water shortages**

Residents in Johannesburg, South Africa began protests November 26, following six days of water shortages after ongoing interrupted supplies. Tyres were set alight and traffic disrupted.

On Thursday, protesters aimed to close the major road from the south and west of the city into the business districts. The hospital and schools are affected by water cuts and have to resort to private suppliers.

### **Nurses at hospital near Queenstown, South Africa walk out over**

## **unfair treatment**

South African nurses at Cofimvaba Hospital near Queenstown walked out on Monday, demanding the acting CEO be dismissed for disrespecting staff and favouritism. They struck two weeks ago over the same issue.

A year ago, 160 workers signed a memorandum after the CEO refused leave and to share information regarding the budget, according to *GroundUp*.

The Eastern Cape Department of Health, which cleared the CEO of charges, instructed nurses to end their unprotected strike.

## **Teachers at Kampala Parents School, Uganda protest over low pay and salary delays**

Teachers at Kampala Parents School, Uganda held a protest November 22 against the poor conditions faced by teachers at private schools.

A video of teachers with placards denouncing low pay, delayed payment, and allegations of favouritism was shared on social media. The school is known as a prestigious place of study.

The school principal, Daphne Kato dismissed the grievances raised at the demonstration.

Blaise Mukama, who teaches at a different private school in Kampala, said “We work from 4 am to 10 pm, with no breaks, no NSSF [National Social Security Fund] contributions, and often months without pay. The school owners charge high fees but neglect our welfare. We have families depending on us, and this neglect is devastating.”

Juma Mwamula, secretary general of Uganda Private Teachers’ Union, encouraged teachers to “diversify their income sources,” admitting the union will not lead a struggle for a liveable wage. The *Observer* noted, “teachers across the country share similar experiences.”



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