Healthcare workers strike in Athens, Greece over pay and staff shortages; protests and strikes continue across Iran over cost-of-living crisis; junior doctors and tertiary college staff in Oyo State, Nigeria strike over pay and conditions

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Greek hospital workers in Athens strike over government cuts, demand better pay and more staff

Healthcare workers in the Athens region of Greece held a 24-hour stoppage Wednesday, marching to the Ministry of Health to protest staff shortages and government underfunding.

The Panhellenic Federation of Employees in Public Hospitals members say public healthcare is at breaking point due to lack of investment. They demand more permanent staff, an end to regional hospital closures and increases in risk pay.

Healthcare facilities in Greece have been devastated by austerity, shrinking by 40 percent compared to 2009, and operating with only half the staff they once had. Meanwhile, private healthcare groups are reaping huge profits.

Over 100,000 protest against the government in Belgrade, Serbia

An estimated 107,000 workers, students and retirees demonstrated against Serbian government health and safety negligence in Belgrade Saturday.

Anti-government protests have been taking place since November 1, 2024, after the collapse of a renovated canopy at Novi Sad city railway station, which caused the death of 15 people. Protestors accuse the government of corruption, negligence and a suspected cover-up.

However, the current protests have quickly spread beyond the immediate cause and express massive opposition to the right-wing government and the hated President Vu?i?, under whom poverty and unemployment have continued to rise in recent years. The rate of unemployment increased to 8.6 percent at the end of 2024.

Thousands of Finnish bakery workers strike for improved pay and conditions

2,000 bakery workers at 150 bakeries operated by the Fazer and Lantmännen groups in Finland went on strike March 11-16 as part of their negotiations with the employer body, the Finnish Food and Drinks Industries' Federation.

The Finnish Food Workers' Union members demand a salary increase matching the cost of living and oppose proposed reductions in working hours and cuts to Sunday premiums.

Hundreds of Turkish factory workers strike for pay and safe working conditions

400 workers at Tezcan Galvaniz, galvanised steel producer in Kocaeli, Turkey have been on strike since March 11. They are demanding an 8 percent wage increase, bonuses and improvements in working conditions.

The Özçelik-?? Sendikas? union members say the factory environment is dangerous. They complain of injuries, illnesses and even deaths from manoeuvring heavy steel coils, exposure to acids and high levels of zinc.

According to the reports of the Workers' Health and Safety Council, at least 1,708 workers were killed at work in Turkey in 2024.

Protests by striking cleaners at airline office at London's Heathrow airport over low pay

Cleaners working for outsourcer OCS at British Airways (BA) began a week-long stoppage on Saturday at Heathrow airport in London. They previously walked out for four days in late February.

The Unite union members are protesting being paid only the legal minimum wage of £11.44 an hour. This is despite OCS signing up to the Living Wage Foundation's real living wage which is paid to its directly employed staff. The real living wage figures are £12.60 an hour outside

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London and £13.85 an hour in London.

The strikers held a protest outside OCS's offices in Feltham on Monday, and outside BA's head office in West Drayton on Tuesday.

OCS made an operating profit of over £28 million in 2023, while BA's parent company JAG made £1.7 billion over last year's summer period. Unite said further action will take place if the dispute is not resolved.

IT support staff working for UK tax offices to walk out over pay

Around 300 UK staff employed by Fujitsu under contract to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), government tax collection services, are to begin 22 days of strikes on Friday until April 23.

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) members based at two major sites, Telford and East London voted by an 87 percent majority for the walkout. The staff employed by Fujitsu were offered a 1.5 percent pay rise offer, while directly employed HMRC staff were awarded 5 percent.

The PCS members previously held two days of stoppages over the same issue at the end of January.

UK phlebotomists at Gloucestershire hospitals strike over pay

Thirty-seven phlebotomists (blood sample takers) employed by Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in England began a three-day stoppage on Monday.

The Unison union members, working at Cheltenham and Gloucester hospitals voted by a 97 percent majority for the action. They oppose being on the NHS Band 2 pay scale earning £12.08 an hour. The level of pay leaves them struggling to pay bills. They argue that because of the skill sets needed to take blood, they should be on Band 3, giving them around £1 an hour more. They began the action after the failure of talks over a year to resolve the issue.

The workers are also due to begin a four-day strike March 24.

Mounting protests across Iran in response to deteriorating social and economic conditions

Tuesday, which was the annual fire festival day ahead of the Iranian New Year, saw anti-government protests across Iran.

Cities holding such protests included Ahvaz, Karaj, Isfahan, Mashhad, Rasht, Qom and Tehran. Protests also took place in provincial and rural areas.

Sunday saw steel industry and Social Security Organisation retirees protest in the southern Iran city of Ahvaz. They were protesting the failure of their pensions to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living. The same day saw Social Security retirees in Shush and Rasht holding protests over their inadequate pensions.

Contract workers employed by the Oil and Gas Company in Gachsaran also held a further round of protests on Sunday over job insecurity and poor working conditions. In Gorgan in northern Iran, radiology technicians protested overdue benefits and work conditions.

On Saturday, oil contract workers at the Nargesi unit of the Gachsaran Oil and Gas Company protested the low minimum wage figure. They also demanded wage increases in line with inflation figures, to be given direct employment and the end of the use of contractors.

A rolling series of strikes and protests continue to sweep across Iran in response to deteriorating social and economic conditions. US government sanctions and war plans against the country only fuel these developments.

Resident doctors and tertiary college staff in Oyo State, Nigeria continue strikes over pay and conditions

Resident (junior) doctors and tertiary college staff in Oyo State, Nigeria are continuing their indefinite strikes.

Resident doctors at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Teaching Hospital, Ogbomosho walked out March 7 over non-implementation of the new minimum wage of N70,000, dilapidated hospital buildings and severe staff shortages. Other issues include non-implementation of allowances, non-payment of arrears and refunds and non-payment of training funds.

Tertiary academic staff began their indefinite strike on March 10 over similar issues.

Nigerian students at Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic protest police brutality and corruption

Students at Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Nigeria held a protest against extortion and police brutality on March 17. They accuse the police of arresting them and demanding cash with violence.

The students held placards with slogans including "End police brutality now" and "This extortion must stop" until they were dispersed by police using teargas.

Student Union Government president, Geoffrey George, who led the protest, said students had suffered oppression by police and hoodlums. Last week, a video trending on social media showed a polytechnic student being beaten and dragged on the ground by policemen. Hoodlums stealing their phones were protected by the police.

Pilots at South African Airways on work-to-rule over pay offer

Pilots at South African Airways (SAA) began a work-to-rule on Wednesday after wage talks collapsed.

The National Transport Movement Pilot Forum and SAA Pilots Association members walked out in May for a 30 percent pay rise, revised to15.7 percent. When SAA offered 7.2 percent, the pilots walked out on December 5.

The latest rejected offer included a 7.66 percent rise now and 3 percent next year with additional benefits.

Traffic officers in Msunduzi Municipality, South Africa picket city hall over pay and conditions

Traffic officers in the Municipality of Msunduzi, South Africa held a picket March 12 outside city hall in Pietermaritzburg.

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The South African Municipal Workers Union members have a number of grievances around shortage of vehicles, new uniforms, management opportunities for women, delayed overtime pay, abuse by a senior manager, threats and the assault of an employee.

They handed over a memorandum of demands to the city manager.

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