

General strike over continuing austerity paralyses Greece; strikes in the West Bank, Middle East and beyond demand an end to Israel's genocide in Gaza; nationwide protests against economic hardship and loss of democratic rights in Nigeria meet with police repression

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.*

Hundreds of thousands hold general strike across Greece against continuing austerity

Workers across Greece, including teachers, health workers, civil servants, seamen, transport workers and others took part in a 24-hour nationwide general strike Wednesday, with marches and rallies across all major cities. Flights, ferries and public transport were disrupted as hundreds of thousands demanded an end to austerity measures.

Members of the Greek Civil Servants Trade Union (Adedy), General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and other unions were joined by students, the unemployed, retirees and young people in mass demonstrations.

The protestors called for political changes to address the cost-of-living crisis, affordable housing, a national minimum wage, collective bargaining rights alongside many other demands.

The Syriza government (2015-2019), hailed by the pseudo-left internationally, implemented the austerity measures demanded by the European Union and International Monetary Fund, paving the way for the return of the right-wing New Democracy to power.

Tens of thousands demonstrate across Spain for affordable housing and against property speculation

Tens of thousands of workers, students and retirees marched in cities across Spain on Saturday to protest the nationwide housing crisis. 150,000 demonstrated in Madrid with thousands more rallying in Barcelona, Valencia, Seville and other major cities.

The protests, convened by tenants' unions, housing activists and trade unions, say the lack of affordable housing is caused by property speculation and the rise of tourist lets. They demand government legislation against property investment and call for rent strikes to put

pressure on landlords.

Students and teachers throughout Italy in national strike and demonstrations against government cuts in education

Thousands of university and high school students and teachers across Italy took to the streets April 4 to protest cuts in education and for improvements in public teachers' pay and conditions. Demonstrations took place in Rome, Genoa, Turin, Naples, Milan and other cities.

Unione Sindicale di Base members say university cuts of €1.3 billion will take place over the next three years. They call for the money earmarked for military spending to be used instead to reduce teachers' workloads, invest in public education and create permanent teaching posts.

Belgian rail workers strike against government austerity measures affecting pensions, working conditions and rail services

Workers for Belgium's state-owned rail company held a one-day national stoppage Tuesday against pension reforms and government cuts. Further strike days on April 15, 22 and 29 are planned.

The ACOD, ACV, VSOA, OVS and ASTB union members are opposing increases in the pension age and changes in duty times and hours. They also object to station closures and other government cuts to the rail network.

Hundreds of tyre factory workers at Bridgestone in Spain strike against redundancies

Hundreds of Spanish employees at the multinational giant, Bridgestone Corporation, began the first of several strike days Wednesday. They are

protesting the announcement of 546 job losses at the global tyre manufacturer's plants in Northern Spain.

The CCOO, UGT, BUB, SITB and ELA union members from the two affected factories in Basauri and Puente San Miguel held demonstrations in the town centres at the news.

According to Bridgestone's latest financial report, its 2024 profits of \$2.77 billion were partially "due to the steady implementation of restructuring."

Academic staff at London's Brunel University walk out over job cuts

Academic staff at London's Brunel University began a week-long stoppage on Monday against plans by university management to cut 423 jobs, of which 282 will be compulsory redundancies.

The University and College Union (UCU) members took 11 days of stoppages since the end of February, including a four-day stoppage last week.

The walkouts will be followed by action short of striking. This will include refusing to cover for absent colleagues, not rescheduling classes cancelled due to strike action and refusing to take part in any voluntary activity.

UK universities are being hit with massive job losses, including at Cardiff, Durham, Newcastle and Dundee. One in four are expected to shed jobs. The UCU refuses to mobilise its members against the Labour government.

Joint rally by striking workers at London's Heathrow airport

Wednesday saw a joint rally by striking Wilson James workers and OCS cleaners at Heathrow airport, London.

Around 500 Wilson James workers walked out for one day. The Unite union members assist passengers with restricted mobility. They are paid less than colleagues carrying out the same role at London's Gatwick airport.

A previous scheduled strike was postponed after the employer made an improved pay offer. The workers rejected this revised offer.

The OCS cleaners work on contracts to clean British Airways facilities at Heathrow. They began their stoppage, due to last until April 23, on Tuesday, having previously held stoppages in February and March. They are pushing for increased pay.

They are currently paid the legal minimum wage of £12.21 an hour, despite OCS being accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. The Living Wage Foundation's current wage figure for London is £13.85 an hour, but OCS only pays this to its directly employed staff.

Both companies are highly profitable. Wilson James reported gross profits of £35.4 million for the year to July 2024, with gross turnover increasing 17.7 percent on the previous year. OCS's operating profits for 2023 were £28.3 million.

Strikes protesting Israel's genocide in Gaza in the West Bank and across the Middle East

The Global Campaign to Stop the Genocide in Gaza Coalition issued a

call Sunday for strikes and protests in occupied Palestinian territory and among the Palestinian diaspora, to take place Monday. They called for solidarity with Gaza and in opposition to Israel's ongoing genocide.

Strikes took place in the West Bank. Shops and businesses were closed, along with banks, government offices, and schools. All cities and town across the West Bank took part in the general strike.

The call was taken up across the Middle East and beyond. Strikes were reported in Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia and Turkey.

In Bangladesh, strikes and protests took place at Chittagong and Dhaka universities. Students at the American University in Beirut called for a boycott of "genocide supporters," while in Konya in Turkey shopkeepers hung out posters calling for solidarity with Gaza. In the Pakistani city of Karachi, traders across the city supported the call, with retail and wholesale markets shutting for the day.

In Kuwait, some businesses suspended all financial transactions while others only accepted cash transactions, from which they made donations to Gaza charities.

Strike by Israeli Foreign Workers Administration staff over workloads

Staff working for the Israeli Foreign Workers Administration walked out on Sunday, with the stoppage continuing Monday. They were protesting their increased workload as Israel steps up its quota for foreign workers.

Prior to the beginning of Israel's genocidal war against Gaza there were around 160,000 foreign workers. Israel relied on the labour of around 100,000 Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank travelling into Israel each day to work. Since the beginning of the war, this source of labour stopped.

Israel plans to double the quota of foreigners entering the country and planned to employ around an additional 500 Israeli workers to administer the increase. However, because of low wages it failed to attract enough applicants, increasing the workload on the current staff.

Iraqi teachers and public sector workers walk out over pay and conditions

Monday marked the second day of protests and strikes by teachers and other public sector workers in Iraq. They were calling for improved pay and working conditions.

Cities hit by school closures included the capital Baghdad, Karbala as well as in the provinces of Al-Diwaniyah and Najaf.

Cost-of-living protests continue across Iran

Monday saw protests by Iran Telecommunications Company retirees across many cities in Iran including Ahvaz, Bijar, Marivan and Rasht. Their chants included, "Inflation and high prices are killing the people."

Monday also saw protests by Iranian Offshore Oil Company workers on the island of Lavan in southern Iran.

The protests are part of the ongoing round of strikes against the cost-of-

living crisis impacting Iran. Social and economic distress are exacerbated by US attempts to undermine the regime with sanctions and its war threats. The Trump regime has sent aircraft carriers, destroyers and bombers to within striking distance of Iran.

Protests against economic hardship and loss of democratic rights across Nigeria met with police repression

Protesters, who gathered peacefully in Nigeria's capital city Abuja and Lagos on April 7 to oppose economic hardship and loss of democratic rights, were attacked by police with tear gas.

The protest, involving tens of thousands nationwide, was called by the "Take-It-Back Movement" among others. Participants carried placards with slogans including, "Stop the repression" and "Let us breathe."

The organisers accuse the government of misusing the Cybercrimes Act to clamp down on free speech. The National Coordinator of the Take-It-Back Movement, Juwon Sanyaolu, said the protest was to resist what he called the "increasing authoritarianism" of the government, and demanded relief for those suffering from inflation and insecurity.

Federal government employees in Ibadan, Nigeria protest non-payment of wages

Staff at the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IAR&T) in Ibadan, Nigeria protested the non-payment of their December salaries on April 7. They locked the entrance to the institute, preventing access.

Michael Agbaje, Chairman of the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities, IAR&T branch described it as sad that his members were not paid. He said the protest would continue until they got their December wages, appealing to the Accountant-General to "do the needful."

Polytechnic staff strike in Ondo State, Nigeria over non-payment of salaries

Staff at the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Ondo State, Nigeria began an indefinite strike April 9 over non-payment of their salaries.

The Non-Academic Staff Union and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Polytechnics members staged a protest on the campus to demand the six months' salaries they are owed. They denounced the state government's failure to implement the national minimum wage. The workers complain they have been subjected to untold hardships as a result.

South African waste collection workers in Johannesburg and sanitation workers in KwaZulu-Natal protest abysmal work conditions

Waste collection workers at the twelve Pikitup depots in Johannesburg, South Africa walked out for two days on April 2 and 4. The workers demand the reinstatement of transport services to work, which the City of Johannesburg-owned company lifted.

Last year, Pikitup workers went on strike to demand permanent contracts.

Also on April 4, sanitation workers in KwaZulu-Natal marched to the Department of Water and Sanitation in Durban to protest poor work conditions.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union members have had no workplace or tools since their offices burned down in October 2023. Workers were told by management to work remotely, despite many of them having no cell phones or computers.



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