

# 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.*

## Italian rail workers in one-day stoppage for improved pay and conditions

Railway workers in Italy held a 24-hour strike May 23 to demand cost of living pay rises and improvements in health and safety regulations. The stoppage caused disruption throughout the country.

The USB and SGB union members demand a renewed collective bargaining agreement and were joined in their stoppage from 9 a.m. until 5p.m. by National Assembly of State Rail members. Maintenance workers were not involved as they held a separate strike April 11. Rail unions have been stretching strike activity over the last eighteen months.

## Strike by bank cashiers in Greece against sudden sackings

Bank workers throughout Greece held a 24-hour walkout May 23 to demand the reinstatement of three Attica Bank workers fired at the Athens branch, one a union representative.

The Federation of Bank Employee Unions of Greece members stopped work in opposition to the unexpected sackings which came only weeks after a collective bargaining agreement between workers and employers was signed.

## Teachers in Asturias, Spain strike for improved pay and working conditions

Thousands of teachers in the Asturias region of Spain walked out and reduced staffing to minimum levels Tuesday and Wednesday to support their demands over pay and working days.

Infant and primary school teachers threaten an indefinite strike from June 2 while secondary school teachers plan to extend their stoppages until June 19.

The CCOO, UGT, Suatea and CSIF union members want to guarantee the quality of public education and for this to be reflected in recognition of their work and rewarded appropriately in pay and conditions.

## Turkish chemical workers in stoppage for living wage

Over 200 employees at Turkish agricultural fertiliser manufacturer Toros Tarim, in the cities of Adana and Mersin, went on strike May 21 to demand a 137 percent wage rise. The employer offered 52.5 percent.

The Petrol-?? union members are struggling with debt and poverty after years of stagnating pay. Many other chemical workers in Turkey at DYO Paint, Basic Gasket and TPI Composites are also on strike for a living wage. Inflation in the country was 38 percent in April alone.

## Care workers launch first national walkout in Scotland for a decade over pay and broken promises

Hundreds of frontline care staff employed by Enable Scotland have launched a five-day rolling strike—the first national walkout in the sector in over a decade. Beginning May 29 in East Renfrewshire and continuing through Aberdeenshire, Moray, Ayrshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow, the action will end in a protest outside the Scottish Parliament on June 12.

The Scottish National Party-led government is attempting to deflect and justify the pittance care workers are paid. Social Care Minister Maree Todd pointed to a £125 million budget pledge for 2025-26 stating it allowed frontline care workers “at least the Real Living Wage of £12.60 an hour.”

Unison Scotland regional organiser Jennifer McCarey said: “The last thing care workers want to do is strike. It’s been a very difficult decision for them. But promises of pay increases made by government ministers have been broken and Enable workers’ pay has worsened.

A spokesperson for Enable criticised the action while pointing to their long-established partnership with Unison. “Enable is disappointed by the decision to strike, but we are working positively with UNISON on our shared principle of minimising the adverse impact of this action on the people we support. Significantly enhanced pay beyond the real living wage is entirely dependent on external funding.”

This is a strike against the Scottish ruling establishment’s contempt for care workers and the essential services they provide. Many staff are struggling on poverty pay while being burdened with enormous responsibility.

Anna Baird, a personal assistant with Enable for eight years, summed up the mood: “I love my job and the people I support, that’s why this decision was so hard. But we’re at breaking point.

“We’ve been made promises for years, but nothing changes. Our pay doesn’t reflect the responsibility we carry, and many of us are struggling to make ends meet. We’re just asking to be valued for the vital work we do.”

## Drivers at Scottish bus company begin series of walkouts over unacceptable pay offer

Around 430 bus drivers working for Stagecoach West Scotland walked out on Monday. This is to be followed by stoppages on June 2 and 6 after which continuous action will begin June 9, scheduled to last until July 21.

The Unite union members voted by a 98 percent majority for the action after rejecting a 4 percent pay offer from the company, which would leave them the poorest paid drivers among Stagecoach's UK operations.

Drivers based at depots in Ardrossan, Arran, Ayr and Kilmarnock took part in the action but according to Unite, drivers at the Dumfries and Galloway depots are "not involved in this phase of strike action." The strike hit services across west Scotland, including Ayrshire, Glasgow and Lanarkshire.

Previous planned stoppages were suspended after Stagecoach withdrew a threat to cancel drivers' planned leave.

## Further stoppages by academic staff at Dundee university, Scotland, over job cuts

Academic staff at Dundee university began a five-day stoppage Monday over the university's plans to cut jobs to help plug a £35 million financial hole. Initially around 700 posts were slated to be cut, but following discussions with the Scottish government this was reduced to 300.

The University and College Union (UCU) members previously took 15 days of action in February and March. For the UCU the main issue is for the job cuts to be achieved through voluntary not compulsory redundancies.

A Dundee UCU branch spokesperson stated, "We call on the employer to abide by the Scottish government's call to rule out the use of compulsory redundancies and to commit to making any savings through voluntary methods."

The university plans to close the renowned forensic science Levenhulme research centre with the loss of 24 jobs. Staff working for the EduAT educational technology team unit are also threatened with compulsory closure.

Universities across the UK are planning job cuts in response to a funding crisis. Delegates at a UCU conference held in Liverpool at the weekend voted overwhelmingly to prepare for industrial action in response to these cuts. In response, the UCU announced Monday that the vote was only a "first step towards a potential strike ballot."

## Strike by health centre cleaners in northwest England over pay delays

Around 40 cleaners at nine health centres across northwest England held a 24-hour strike Tuesday. They are employed by outsourcer Mitie.

The Unison union members are in dispute over late payments. They say problems began with wage delays after being transferred from the previous outsourcer OCS in June last year. They are also still waiting for a £1,655 remittance paid to all health staff for working through the pandemic.

Among the health centres affected were the Barbara Castle Health Centre in Blackburn, St Peter's Health Centre in Burnley and Darwen Health Centre.

## Nationwide strike by truck drivers in Iran has severe impact

What began as a strike by truck drivers over lack of safety and other issues in the port city Bandar Abbas on May 19 had, by the beginning of this week, led to stoppages by drivers in over 100 cities throughout Iran. Tehran's main truck terminal was at a complete standstill. Their slogan is, "Until our demands are met, we will not move."

The April 26 explosion at the Shadid Rajaee Port, (part of Bandar Abbas's larger port structure), resulting from unsafely stored explosives, killed around 50 people and injured more than a 1,000. Truck drivers were among those killed, while other drivers whose trucks were damaged in the explosion are caught in a bureaucratic maze trying to get compensation.

Other grievances of the drivers include reduced diesel quotas, increasing insurance costs, the low level of tariffs paid to the drivers and lack of government support for their industry.

Iran is heavily dependent on road transport to move goods around the country and the stoppages are having a heavy impact. Iranian security forces responded by harassing the strikers. A recent statement by the Truckers and Heavy Vehicles Drivers Union reported 11 striking drivers in Kermanshah were arrested.

Bakers in several cities have been holding protests since May 17, joining up with protesting drivers after their dispute began. Their grievances include rising costs, cuts in government subsidies and random electricity power cuts, often early morning, impacting bread production.

The protests by truck drivers and bakers comes on top of ongoing disparate protests by farmers and workers across the country.

Iran, whose economic collapse is due in part to US sanctions, is threatened with "obliteration" by the Trump regime as part of its plans to restructure the Middle East in preparation for war against China.

## Doctors in three Kenyan counties on indefinite strike over pay and conditions

Around 1,000 doctors in Kiambu, Marsabit and Kakamega counties in Kenya walked out indefinitely on May 27. Staff protested outside the National Treasury Building in Nairobi.

The Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union members demand higher pay, promotions and an end to unfair dismissals. KMPDU National Chairperson Dr Abidan Mwachi noted there had been mass resignations, an "alarming" rise in substance abuse by medical staff, and a toxic work environment, which were signs of a collapsing health system.

The Kiambu County government began sacking striking doctors in response.

## Teachers in Nigerian capital continue strike, demand payment of arrears

Nigerian primary teachers and council workers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are continuing with their strike that began December 2024.

The previous week, six area council chairmen authorized payment of the minimum wage of N70,000 to both primary school teachers and area council workers, but leaving other arrears unpaid.

While saying that this was not enough to bring the strike to an end, the

unions supported FCT Minister Nyesom Wike's proposal to use 10 percent of the councils' Internally Generated Revenue to pay towards the council workers' entitlements—paving the way for a settlement by moving money around in the councils' budgets.

### **Ghanaian university staff on strike over working conditions**

Ghanaian university staff began an indefinite strike on May 22 over the government's failure to keep their promises on their conditions of service. The union, however, called it off the following day.

The Senior Staff Association of the University of Ghana justified this saying it was based "on the government's goodwill to act swiftly on our concerns..." The union capitulated to the Minister of Education, who accused the union of showing "bad faith" in the government by calling the strike in the first place.

### **Unemployed workers in Johannesburg, South Africa demonstrate for jobs at Eskom**

Around 70 unemployed workers protested outside the headquarters of electricity utility company Eskom in Johannesburg, South Africa Wednesday.

The workers, who live in the Emalahleni, Victor Khanye, Steve Tshwete and Thembisile municipalities, are demanding jobs at Eskom's power stations, and that local residents are given priority. The unions in South Africa have stood by as unemployment rose to 32.9 percent in the first quarter of 2025, and failed to mobilise a unified struggle on the basis of jobs for all.

### **Residents of informal settlement in Cape Town, South Africa protest state demolition of homes**

Residents of Ezihagwini informal settlement in Dunoon, Cape Town in South Africa protested last week over several days against the demolition of buildings. They blocked two busy roads.

The City of Cape Town had bulldozed three brick walls, shacks where people were living and walls around the homes. The police intervened with violence and arrested four residents, who appeared in court Monday. Community leaders are raising money for bail.

Dunoon, with a population of 350,000, is overcrowded and blighted with a housing crisis. Zizipho Swaartbooi, a Dunoon resident for nearly 30 years, told *GroundUp*, "Law enforcement comes even at night to demolish, and then our children sleep outside in the cold. We must beg neighbours to take them in. They tear down everything. We don't have money to replace it..."

Another resident explained, "We were renting before, but we had to choose between paying rent and feeding our children." The city does not recognise Ezihagwini or supply it with water and electricity.

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with a poverty rate of 64 percent for black South Africans under the government led by the African National Congress.

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