

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.

Greek rail workers in nationwide strike over safety conditions and lack of investment

Railway drivers and engineers working for Hellenic Train in Greece held a 24-hour nationwide strike Tuesday in protest at abysmal safety conditions.

The Panhellenic Union of Railways members demand greater investment in rolling stock and infrastructure, safety upgrades—including the installation of the protective European Train Control System—and the opening of regional lines closed due to a lack of maintenance. They also want improvements in day-to-day working conditions and facilities.

Hellenic Train was state-owned until privatisation in 2017 and is now owned by FS Italian Group. The network has been run down since privatisation and is now one of the most dangerous in Europe. From 2018 to 2020, according to the European Union Agency for Railways, Greece recorded the highest fatality rate per million train kilometres among 28 European nations.

The rail walkout is the latest in mass protests and strikes following the 2023 Tempi rail collision which resulted in 57 deaths, and a government cover-up.

Doctors in Spain strike for better pay, conditions and working hours

Doctors throughout most of Spain went on a one-day strike June 13 and demonstrated against government reforms of health statutes in the country. Rallies were held in many cities, with up to 90 percent take-up in some regions.

The State Confederation of Medical Unions, Andalusian Medical Union and other regional medical union members demand a reduction in weekly working hours, improved work-life balance and an end to compulsory overtime. They also want all work payments, including overtime and on-call payments, to count towards their retirement pension.

The strike by medics is part of a growing strike wave. In Cadiz, 26,000 metal workers walked out on Wednesday and Thursday over falling living standards.

Museum workers at the underfunded Louvre in Paris, France strike over working conditions

Gallery staff, ticket office workers and security personnel at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France held an impromptu strike Monday to protest intolerable working conditions, causing chaos for visitors.

The CGT-Culture union members abandoned their posts after a monthly meeting with management failed to address their concerns about understaffing, visitor overcrowding and poor working conditions in the museum's dilapidated buildings. They say government subsidies to the Louvre have decreased by 20 percent in the last 10 years, and proposed modernisation plans will not solve the long-term problems.

The museum, created initially by the nationalisation of the royal art collections during the French Revolution in 1793, was proclaimed by the revolutionaries to be “a sanctuary where the people will elevate themselves by becoming conscious of beauty.”

Store workers at Dyson shops in Turkey demonstrate for negotiating rights around pay and conditions

Representatives of 350 workers employed by multinational Dyson at their stores in Turkey protested outside the Istanbul branch June 13 to support their demand for a collective bargaining agreement.

The Koop-?? union members, who suffer severe working conditions, low wages and a lack of social rights, say the domestic appliances manufacturer have pressurised and obstructed them in their legal right to negotiate collectively. They plan to demonstrate further outside Dyson shops in other cities.

Plastic packaging workers at plant in Wigan, UK strike over imposed shift changes

Around 150 workers employed by Alpla UK in Golborne, Wigan walked out Monday and Tuesday.

The Unite union members oppose the company's threat to impose shift changes that would increase working hours and include more weekend and night work. Alpla is threatening to use “fire and rehire” measures to impose the changes.

Alpla makes plastic containers for leading brands such as Britvic, Coca Cola and Unilever. Its UK operation had a turnover of more than £300 million and profits of over £26 million last year.

Further stoppages are planned for June 27-28 and July 11-12.

Teachers at UK school trust walk out over plans to extend school day

Teachers at 14 schools run by the Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) in the north of England began a three-day walkout on Tuesday. It follows a two-day stoppage last week and a one-day stoppage the week before.

The action by National Education Union (NEU) and NASUWT members is in response to OGAT's plan to increase the school day by 30 minutes at all 28 sites run by the trust from September this year.

The schools affected by the action are: Outwood Academy Grange, Outwood Academy Freston and Outwood Academy Hemsworth in Wakefield; Outwood Academy City, Sheffield; Outwood Academy Danum, Doncaster; Outwood Academy Easingwold, North Yorks; Outwood Academy Foxhills, North Lincolnshire; Outwood Academy Shafton, Barnsley; Outwood Academy Hindley, Wigan; Outwood Academy Kirby, Outwood Academy Portland and Outwood Academy Valley, Nottinghamshire, Outwood Academy Redcar, Redcar and Cleveland; and Outwood Academy Newbould, Derbyshire

In a separate dispute, NEU members at the BSix sixth form college in Hackney, London began a walkout June 12, due to last until July 4. They are protesting plans by New City College, who recently took over the school, to get rid of A-level courses, replacing them with vocational courses and cutting some teaching posts. The academy has a reputation for working with disadvantaged students enabling them to achieve university entrance.

Underground rail system workers in Glasgow, Scotland to strike over working conditions

Around 100 drivers and station staff employed by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport on the underground rail system, are to hold a 24-hour stoppage Friday.

The Unite union members are protesting chronic understaffing, which has led to workers routinely working up to 10 hours beyond their contracted 39 hours and repeatedly called to take shifts at short notice. The extra worked hours do not attract improved shift, overtime or weekend allowances.

Additional 24-hour stoppages are planned for June 25, 27 and 28. An overtime ban came into effect June 13.

The strikes are expected to impact transport access to several events taking place in the city, including the Punk All Dayer festival.

Hundreds of support staff at Liverpool University, England to strike over hybrid working dispute

Hundreds of support staff employed by Liverpool University are set to walk out on Friday and Saturday.

The Unite union members oppose the university's plans to amend the hybrid working arrangement. Currently staff can work from home three days a week. The university wants to reduce this to two. Unite accuses some managers of pre-empting the change by scheduling in-person meetings on the days workers would normally be working from home.

Friday and Saturday are planned open days at the university and the action is expected to cause disruption. The strikers are to hold a rally outside the Harold Cohen library building at 1 p.m. on Friday.

Municipal workers in Umhlathuze Local Municipality, South Africa walk out over pay and horrendous conditions

South African workers began a protected strike June 17 at Umhlathuze Local Municipality, Kwa-Zulu Natal over unresolved grievances.

The South African Municipal Workers Union members have a catalogue of complaints, which the Municipality have ignored. They cite unfair dismissals, corruption, and negligence of safety and security at work including exposure to hazardous materials. No danger allowance is paid. Buildings are dilapidated and lack toilet facilities.

The Municipality will not employ workers with disabilities. Expanded Public Works Programme workers on temporary contracts for five years are not made permanent, yet there are staff shortages. Workers complain of unfair grading and non-payment of overtime. There are inadequate and insufficient tools and lack of personal protection equipment.

Judicial staff on indefinite strike in Ondo State, Nigeria

Judicial staff in Ondo State, Nigeria began an indefinite strike June 13, following the expiry of a seven-day ultimatum over a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Court proceedings have been brought to a standstill.

The MoU, signed by the state government in 2015, mandated release of funds to the judiciary but has not been acted upon. The Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria, Ondo State Branch called on the state government to take steps to honour its obligations and implement the MoU.

Zimbabwean teachers in Manicaland protest over low pay

Teachers in Manicaland, Zimbabwe held a protest to highlight their poverty wages and inadequate working conditions. Their monthly pay has dwindled to around US\$300. They are demanding an increase to at least US\$1,260.

One of the protesters explained, "That money will be enough to take our children to school. We also demand basic education for all. The elites have been able to take their children to universities out of the country. Our children are languishing in poverty. It is high time we make sure that our children [get] quality education."

Ethiopian health workers continue strike in the face of government intimidation

Ethiopian healthcare professionals are continuing their strike, begun May 13, to demand better pay and conditions.

They are refusing to be intimidated despite arrests by the authorities, including the arrest and detention of Dr. Mahlet Guush.

Dr. Guush was jailed after appearing on the BBC's *Focus on Africa* to talk about the strike. She was released on bail on June 10, after suffering three weeks in jail.



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