

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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## Walkout by academics at Bradford University, England over job cuts

Academic staff at Bradford University, England began a five-day stoppage Monday.

The University and College Union (UCU) members voted overwhelmingly to strike in May over the university's plans to cut jobs and departments.

According to the UCU, the university plans a new structure, reducing the current four faculties to two and closing the Chemistry and Film and Television schools. The university is seeking to save around £16 million through the loss of around 450 posts.

As in other disputes involving university job cuts, for the UCU the contentious issue is compulsory redundancies. It does not oppose redundancies as long as they are imposed "voluntarily". Local newspaper *The Telegraph and Argus* quoted the UCU branch secretary: "What we really want to see is the commitment to stop compulsory redundancies... we want as few redundancies as possible, but that real commitment is possible, it's not a massive demand."

Previous action was suspended last week for talks between the UCU and management but failed to reach any resolution. On Wednesday, the striking academics held a rally to lobby a university council board meeting.

UK universities are threatened with 10,000 job cuts. While there have been some strikes at individual institutions, the UCU is opposed to coordinated action throughout the sector. Vital departments and research are threatened with closure. The UCU has a legacy of betraying previous struggles over pay, conditions and pensions.

## Continuing strike by phlebotomists working for the Gloucestershire, England hospital trust

Thursday marks the 120th day of stoppages by around 40 phlebotomists (blood sample takers) employed by Gloucestershire Hospitals National Health Service (NHS) Foundation. Their action, which began in March, involves all the phlebotomists employed by the Trust.

The Unison union members oppose being paid on the NHS Band 2 pay scale, arguing that because of the level of skill needed in taking blood they should be paid on the higher Band 3 pay scale.

According to Unison, the dispute is the longest-running continuous strike in NHS history.

## Oil refinery workers in Lindsey, UK protest plant closure

Workers at a UK oil refinery in Lindsey held a protest organised by the Unite union Thursday lunchtime outside the town hall in Grimsby. The oil refinery went into administration in June.

Administrators were unable to find a buyer for the plant and are in the process of running down production with complete closure planned for the autumn. Closure would result in the loss of around 1,000 jobs. Unite is calling for government intervention to prevent its closure.

## Bus drivers strike in the Balearic Islands, Spain over pay and working conditions

Hundreds of bus drivers for the Transports de les Illes Balears (TIB) in Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza, Spain stopped work July 18, 21 and 23, demanding an 8.5 percent pay rise and more scheduled break times.

The Autonomous Workers of the Isles union members say their strike will become indefinite from Friday without an improvement on the local government's offer of 8-12 percent over 4 years.

## TikTok moderators in Berlin, Germany strike over redundancies caused by the use of AI

Content moderators in the Berlin offices of the social media app TikTok went on strike July 17 in protest over 150 job losses, as plans go ahead for the workers to be replaced by computers using artificial intelligence.

The Verdi union members demand three years' salary as redundancy pay and a 12-month notice period.

## **Protests in Iran against collapse in living standards continue**

Monday saw dozens of workers who had worked to construct the Zamzam project 3 site at Khuzestan Steel Industries protest outside the plant. Accompanied by family members, they demanded reinstatement.

The workers, who helped construct the site, say they were promised jobs at the plant once the construction was complete. On completion, those jobs failed to materialise.

Security forces were unable to prevent the workers and family members from entering the plant to protest. Similar protests were held over several days in June.

In recent weeks, youth across Iran have been carrying out attacks on the symbols of the regime in response to rising bread prices. According to official sources, the price of Barbari bread (a Persian flatbread) in Tehran is 35,000 rials, but it is in fact selling at prices up to double that.

Economic conditions in Iran mean around 70 percent of workers exist below the poverty line. Their situation is exacerbated by US sanctions and recent bombing raids orchestrated by the Trump regime. The US actions are an attempt to reorganise the Middle East as a prelude to war against China.

## **Zimbabwe lecturers continue their months-long pay stoppage**

Lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe have been on strike since April against a 90 percent drop in their earnings.

Narshon Kohlo, chairperson of the Zimbabwe National Students Union at the University of Zimbabwe, said using new hires to break the strike was failing students. "Some of them [strikebreakers] are just recent graduates," he said, adding they do not have the experience to replace those on strike.

Years of hyperinflation, instability and declining government support have left institutions bereft of resources, paying minuscule salaries that have caused an exodus of professionals leaving the country.

## **Nigerian unions end Ogun State public sector strike over pay and conditions**

The Nigeria Labour Congress, Trade Union Congress, and Joint Negotiating Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ogun state government to end the strike by public sector workers.

This was despite the fact that workers had rejected the decrees proposed by Governor Dapo Abiodun to end their indefinite strike, begun July 14.

The strike was the result of misuse of the N82 billion contributory pension scheme. Other issues included the new minimum wage, eight years' arrears of leave allowance, and lack of pension increases and staff promotions for 2023-2024.

## **Non-academic staff bring Bayelsa Polytechnic, Nigeria to a standstill over no pay**

Members of the Non-Academic Staff Union at Bayelsa Polytechnic have brought the institution to a standstill in protest at withheld June salaries and failure to pass on four months of union dues. The strike, begun July 11, has continued for nine days.

## **Pilots at South African airline FlySafair walk out over pay and safety**

Budget airline operator FlySafair in South Africa has been hit by a two-week strike by 200 pilots over pay and conditions.

The Solidarity union, which represents two-thirds of the airline's pilots, was due to meet with FlySafair at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

The pilots are demanding pay is restored to pre-COVID levels. They want a rise of 10.5 percent. The employers have offered 5.7 percent. A further demand concerns changes in rosters to seven-day schedules, which are impacting family life. Long hours from dawn until late at night mean little rest and compromise safety.

The pilots' union—SAA Pilots Association at South African Airways (SAA)—have done nothing to mobilise their members in solidarity, allowing SAA to fly FlySafair passengers between Durban and Cape Town in a scabbing operation. The Solidarity union at Lift airlines has done likewise.

## **South African residents protest unaffordable electricity price in Tembisa**

On Monday, hundreds of residents protested in Tembisa township in the city of Ekurhuleni, South Africa, blocking roads with rubble and setting tyres alight. Police dispersed protesters with rubber bullets causing injuries.

After the disturbances, Mayor Doctor Xhakaza suspended the introduction of an electricity tariff fixed at R126, which sparked the unrest. Tembisa is blighted by poor housing, including informal dwellings and shacks, and inequality.



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