

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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General strike in Cyprus over government austerity measures including Cost-of-Living Allowance reforms

Thousands of workers held demonstrations and took part in a three-hour nationwide strike in Cyprus September 11, affecting public services, schools, hospitals, airports and public transport. Hospitals dealt with emergencies only and over fifty flights were cancelled.

The strike was organised by the Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus, the Pancyprian Public Servants' Trade Union, the Cyprus Workers' Confederation, the Pancyprian Federation of Labour and other unions and labour organisations. It came after talks between employers, the government and the unions over reforms to the Cost-of-Living Allowance (CoLA) and other social benefit faltered.

Workers see the CoLA as a vital protection against inflation and oppose these reforms and other government austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

Transport workers in Lisbon, Portugal strike for improved pay and conditions

Workers throughout the Lisbon Metro system, Portugal held partial strikes on September 9 and 11 as part of their dispute with the company. The sporadic stoppages for better working benefits and conditions have been ongoing since May.

The Lisbon Metro Workers' Union members demand increased lunch allowances and overtime pay, a reduction in the standard working week and bonuses for working in holiday periods such as Christmas.

Airport security staff in Madrid, Spain work to rule for pay increases and other benefits

Over 800 subcontracted security workers at Madrid-Barajas airport in Spain engaged in an indefinite wildcat work-to-rule Sunday in protest over their pay and working conditions.

The staff, employed by Trablisa Security Services, say pay is lower and workloads higher than at other Spanish airports. They demand a monthly bonus of over €1000, a 75 percent increase in overtime payments and

retirement at 52, commensurate with state defence forces and security.

Walkout at UK nuclear power site over allowances

Around 1,500 workers employed at Sellafield nuclear power plant in northwest England began a four-day strike Monday.

The Unite union members are employed as electricians, groundworkers, joiners, pipefitters, riggers and welders to maintain the site.

They are seeking a premium allowance in recognition of the hazards and skill sets required to work on a nuclear power site. The workers voted in August by over 90 percent for the action, which includes an indefinite work to rule begun August 23. The current action is part of a long-running dispute over the payment of a premium allowance.

Civil servants at UK housing ministry walk out over office closures

Around 170 civil servants working for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in England are taking part in a series of targeted strikes, which will continue until September 25.

On Tuesday, Public and Commercial Services union members targeted the MHCLG office on Marsham Street in Westminster, setting up a picket line. They are taking the action against MHCLG's threat to close offices, its attendance policy and recruitment strategy.

Previous action has hit MHCLG offices in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Leeds and Manchester.

Ongoing protests by Iranian workers over living conditions

Monday saw further protests by directly employed oil workers in southern Iran, as part of the ongoing "Protest Monday."

Protests were held at several sites including the Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), the South Pars Gas Company and the Fair Jam Gas Refinery. Demands include higher wages, the removal of salary caps and an end to the limit on years of service for pension entitlement.

Contract oil workers at the POGC site in Assaluyeh also held a protest over several issues, including discrimination and poor working conditions.

The same day saw a strike by around 1,500 production workers at the Zamyad Automobile Manufacturing Company. Their demands included higher pay and payment of wages arrears.

The protests and strikes by oil and auto manufacturing workers are part of ongoing struggles by Iranian workers and retirees against the collapse of living standards, exacerbated by US sanctions. Sanctions announced by the UK, France and Germany will further decimate the economy—part of the US/NATO restructuring of the Middle East as a prelude to war against China.

South African workers in Buffalo walk out over outsourcing of services, face police teargas and rubber bullets

On Tuesday, hundreds of South African public sector workers in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality walked out indefinitely over outsourcing of services and to demand permanent jobs.

The South African Municipal Workers' Union members demand an end to the outsourcing of waste collection, electricity, water, sanitation, roads and traffic lights.

In Mdantsane township in Buffalo, police attacked workers with rubber bullets and teargas as they blocked the roads with burning tyres.

Hundreds of workers marched in the city of Ekurhuleni September 11, as their stoppage continues. They are also protesting over the outsourcing of services, affecting cleaners, waste workers and security guards.

The Municipal Employees and Civil Servants Union members oppose the city's decision to outsource services in November. As contract workers, they have no job security or pensions. Every three years the contracts end, and they will be replaced.

They also demand better conditions, including personal protective equipment.

Residents in Mondlo township, KwaZulu-Natal South Africa protest electricity cuts and lack of services

Thousands of residents in Mondlo township, KwaZulu-Natal South Africa protested electricity cuts September 10-11.

Schools and workplaces closed, while residents blocked the roads with burning tyres, stones, tree branches and bottles. In the evening, protesters set alight the Municipal offices.

Residents were responding to the announcement by the municipality that electricity in the township would be cut daily between 5am and 9am. Residents are also demanding improved access to water and sanitation, safer roads and repairs to street lights.

People must walk long distances to collect water from rivers or boreholes. One resident told *GroundUp*, "Our power is reduced, electricity cuts off when it is windy and raining."

There have also been protests against water cut-offs lasting two weeks in the Westbury and Coronationville districts of Johannesburg.

Refuse workers in KwaMashu in Durban, South Africa strike and protest pay cut

Waste workers in KwaMashu township in Durban, South Africa walked out last week after their wages were halved.

The workers are employed by several contractors. Their previous contract, paying around R8,400, ran out in March, and wages were slashed

to R4,000.

Dozens of workers picketed City Hall September 9, and remained at home the following day.

Nigerian doctors in Federal Capital Territory begin indefinite strike over pay and conditions

At an emergency general meeting held on September 14, doctors in Nigeria voted to begin an indefinite national strike the following day. This comes after a seven-day "warning" strike failed to bring any shift by the Federal Capital Territory authorities.

Hospital services were reduced to skeletal levels, and many facilities were at a standstill.

The Association of Resident Doctors in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria members are protesting the following issues—non-payment of 26 doctors after seven months of fruitless dialogue, unsolved unemployment issues, unexplained salary deductions, lack of promotions, and poor facilities, exemplified by the lack of working X-ray machines.

The FCT strike came hours after the National Association of Resident Doctors had suspended the doctors' nationwide strike.

Ugandan teachers begin national strike

Teachers at state-run schools in Uganda stayed away from their schools on the first day of term, September 15, to demand an increase in pay. The Uganda National Teachers' Union members are angry at the growing pay disparity between teachers of arts and sciences.

Kenyan sugar workers strike to demand arrears

Workers at the Sony Sugar Company in Nyanza, Kenya downed tools September 15, demanding salary arrears of Sh350 million accumulated between April 2019 and December 2020.

The government has commanded four state-owned sugar mills (Chemelil, Muhoroni, Sony, and Nzoia) to retrench thousands by October 31, igniting outrage among the workers.

Nigerian judiciary staff in Enugu State begin indefinite strike

On September 12, judiciary staff in Enugu State, Nigeria resumed a strike over non-implementation of the Consolidated Judiciary Salary Structure and non-payment of other entitlements.

The Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN) members have demanded financial autonomy for the state judiciaries for some time. This involves salaries, allowances, and pensions of judicial officers being paid directly from the state judiciary's consolidated funds, rather than through executive or civil service channels.



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