

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.

Bus drivers in Oviedo, Spain strike for better working conditions

Bus drivers at Transportes Unidos de Asturias (TUA) public transport system in Oviedo, Spain began a three-day strike September 18, and demonstrated in the city centre to protest their working conditions. Further strike days are planned for October 8, 9 and 12.

The TUA drivers complain of stress caused by the recent installation of surveillance cameras on buses. They also demand the installation of toilets at the termini of all routes.

Drivers at two First West of England's City Line bus depots walk out over pay

Drivers at First West of England's City Line bus company in Bristol walked out September 16 for four days and held a demonstration September 19.

The 600 Unite union members plan to extend the pay strike for two weeks from October 1-14.

The drivers, who work out of Lawrence Hill and Hengrove—two of the company's six depots—are currently paid £16 an hour. Workers at these two depots had accepted a company offer of a 4.7 percent rise, to £17 an hour, until next March, and 4 percent or up to £17.40 from April 2026. However, they should have had the rise on April 1 and the company wants to stagger the backpay, cheating workers out of 50 percent of what they are owed.

A spokesperson for the union Unite said, "First West of England is part of First Group PLC. Last year First Group PLC had an operating profit of £204.3 million and share dividends were increased by 45 percent compared to the previous year."

Around 110 First Bus drivers in Rochdale walked out on September 19 for four days after rejecting 8.8 percent pay over two years—part of a pay strike by 2,000 drivers at three companies in Greater Manchester. Further strikes are planned at First Bus, Stagecoach and Metroline from September 30 to October 2.

Academic staff at University of Nottingham, England begin strike over job cuts

Academic staff at the University of Nottingham, England walked out on Monday, beginning a four-week strike over 200 proposed redundancies.

Hundreds of administrative staff have already taken voluntary redundancy in a jobs cull threatening 4,000 staff.

Technical workers and academics are next in line. The University College Union (UCU) are calling for no compulsory redundancies and say they have put forward proposals that avoid attacking the workforce.

Unison union members at the university were to walk out Monday to Wednesday. Unison called off the action after receiving an offer they will put to their members.

UCU members at the University of Leicester plan to embark on a three-week stoppage Monday against university plans to make cuts of £11 million, targeting jobs. A rally will take place September 24 at 1pm at the main campus entrance.

Universities nationwide are faced with cuts and 10,000 job losses. Some have seen strikes, as at Bradford, Newcastle and Dundee, but the UCU refuses to mobilise its members in unified action, in order to impose sellout deals involving voluntary redundancies on a university-by-university basis.

National Coal Mining Museum workers continue strike over low pay

Workers at the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, England, are continuing their stoppage begun four weeks ago over pay.

The 40 workers rejected a pay offer of 5 percent or 80p an hour. Some workers earn just £12.60 an hour.

The strike by Unison members, many of them former miners involved in the bitter year-long strike in 1984/85, will continue until October 1. Unison said the museum's chief executive refuses to negotiate.

Union calls off Portuguese airport workers' strike after government's arbitration court declares it illegal

Ongoing strikes planned until the end of the year by Menzies Aviation ground staff have been proclaimed illegal under so-called "minimum service levels" decided by the country's arbitration service.

The customer services staff, maintenance workers, cleaners and baggage handlers, are based at Lisbon, Faro, Porto and other Portuguese airports.

The Metalworkers' and Allied Industries Union and Transport Union members demanded an above-minimum-wage base salary, night shift payments and improved working conditions, but under the direction of the unions their strikes have been called off.

Similar recent strikes by Menzies Aviation ground staff in Spain were

also undermined by abuse of “minimum service level” regulations. The company is a multinational airport service giant in 65 countries, with 2024 global revenue of \$2.6 billion.

Bank workers at HSBC in Malta stage sit-down strike to protect pay after change of ownership

Bank workers at HSBC Malta stopped work indefinitely Monday to force negotiations with the employer ahead of its impending €200 million sale to CrediaBank.

The 900 Malta Union of Bank Employees members say that, according to their collective agreement with HSBC, they should be awarded compensation because of the transfer to a new employer.

Arak Aluminium Company workers in Iran call off hunger strike as protests over wages and conditions escalate nationally

After 50 days of action, workers at Arak Aluminium Company (IRALCO) have suspended their hunger strike action, which has hospitalised some protesters.

Around 4,000 IRALCO workers took the action because the company refused to engage with their grievances and demands over pay and conditions. They are demanding an end to privatisation of the plant, which has seen worsening conditions and two fatal workplace accidents.

They are also calling for job security guarantees, rather than their current precarious, short-term contract employment. They are demanding proper implementation of the job classification scheme and timely payment of wages.

IRALCO’s response to their demands was to escalate repression. In August, arrest warrants were issued for five workers, and 31 others were charged with disturbing public order. The strikers are demanding cancellation of the warrants and the dismissal of all charges.

Management promised to pay wages by September 14, and other demands have gone unanswered. The workers called off the hunger strike, but vowed to return stronger, saying that collective assemblies and demonstrations are more effective.

Their announcement coincided with an intensification of the ongoing protests across the country at wages and conditions. There were peaks of activity on September 19 and 21.

On September 19, formal oil workers at the Nasr and Ilam offshore platforms staged a two-hour protest for an end to wage caps, restoration of retirement benefits, the refund of unlawful tax deductions, a raise in minimum wages and independence for their pension fund.

In Tehran, victims of the Hakim housing project scandal protested at years of financial exploitation and government corruption. Denouncing the role of the judiciary in this, they chanted “Where is justice?”

Aspirant teachers demonstrated against non-transparent and corrupt hiring processes at the Ministry of Education. Education is in a critical state, with 5 million of the country’s 16 million students unable to afford school supplies. Charities are forced to cover the costs instead, and rising costs are making education available only to the wealthy.

In Izeh, Khuzestan, municipal green space workers protested after three months of unpaid wages. They warned that their families are sinking into financial distress as the new school year begins. The authorities’ claim of “budget shortages” has been dismissed as an excuse for neglect.

On September 20, Ahvaz steelworkers mounted new protests over

wages unpaid for two months. They are also protesting cuts to overtime, cancellation of meal allowances the loss of supplementary health insurance, and sudden changes to transportation schedules.

Another wave of coordinated protests on September 21 saw demonstrations across the country. With social services all but collapsed, retirees from many sectors led the way, protesting poverty, neglect and injustice. Actions included rallies by steel industry retirees in Isfahan, and Social Security retirees in Khuzestan. In Shush, Haft-Tappeh and Karkheh, retirees protested outside the local governor’s office. In Rasht, in Gilan province, and Kermanshah, retirees demonstrated outside Social Security building. In Tehran, retirees and educators protested together.

Workers also participated. Oil and gas workers in Aghajari demonstrated with empty dinner plates to symbolise the cost-of-living crisis. Shush and Khuzestan workers chanted “Promise are enough, our tables are empty!” Workers at Ghadeer Steel in Behabad have been on strike for four months over unpaid wages. The situation is worsening further. The imminent closure of a steel mill in Shahroud threatens 300 jobs.

Egyptian aluminium workers in Qena on strike over cut in profit share

About 4,000 workers at the Egyptian aluminium company Egyptalum in Nagaa Hammadi, Qena went on strike to protest the cut in their annual profit share.

The workers began their strike September 18, following the company’s general assembly, which was held to approve the results of the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The cut violated the company’s own bylaws, which entitle employees to 12 percent of net annual profits. The workers are demanding increases in meal allowances, extra incentives, and sector-based bonuses according to the nature of work, in addition to hazard pay.

Union agrees to sellout deal and calls off strike at Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa

The SA Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) called off on Tuesday the week-long strike by municipal workers at Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa.

The workers walked out to demand an end to casualisation and the outsourcing of waste collection, electricity, water, sanitation, roads and traffic lights. During the dispute, they faced police rubber bullets and teargas as they blocked the roads in Mdantsane township with burning tyres.

Instead of a guarantee of permanent employment, SAMWU Regional Secretary said the municipality committed to not eliminating but reducing outsourcing, it was reported. As a sweetener to push through the deal, workers were paid for the strike week.

Workers in other municipalities face the same lack of job security and pensions associated with contract labour. There have been other strikes, for example at the city of Ekurhuleni.

Striking Ugandan teachers threatened with dismissal

Striking Ugandan teachers have been threatened with mass dismissal. Their strike began September 15 against widening pay disparities, especially between science and non-science teachers.

The Minister of Public Service, Muruli Mukasa, warned teachers shortly after the strike began that they faced dismissal.

Over years, teacher unions have staged numerous strikes around payment arrears and unequal pay, but the issues continue to worsen.

General Secretary of the Uganda National Teachers' Union, Filbert Baguma claimed that teachers had been patient for three years, waiting for promised salary adjustments that never came.

Namibian production workers on strike

On September 16, over 500 production workers walked out on strike at Plastic Packaging, one of Namibia's largest manufacturing companies. The strike follows months of fruitless talks between the Metal and Allied Namibian Workers Union and Plastic Packaging's management.

The union is asking for a pay rise of 6 percent and a housing allowance of N\$100, along with back pay from March onwards.

The strike affected all ten branches of the company in Namibia, including those at Okahandja, Windhoek, Walvis Bay, Rundu and Otjiwarongo.

"Normally, we get our increase from 1 March. This year, nothing was given. That is why we decided to go on strike," shop steward Shalimba explained.



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