

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.

Thousands of school teachers in Extremadura, Spain strike for pay parity

Between 7,000 and 13,000 non-tertiary teachers from over 700 nurseries, primary and secondary schools in the Extremadura autonomous community, Spain held a stoppage Tuesday. Many thousands demonstrated in the capital, Mérida.

The PIDE, CSIF, ANPE, CCOO and UGT union members demand their pay be negotiated into line with the rest of Spain's autonomous communities. Negotiations for standardisation have taken place with the Regional Ministry of Education since February, and workers also want any pay levelling to be backdated.

Workers at the Museums and Monuments of Portugal hold another national one-day strike in ongoing pay dispute

Hundreds of public workers at 38 historical buildings across Portugal went on strike October 5, Republic Day, resulting in many site closures. For over a year, staff in museums, galleries, monuments and archaeological sites have refused to work any national holidays. Their last strike was August 15, Assumption Day.

The National Federation of Public and Social Services Workers' Unions members demand extra pay for public holidays and an increase in overtime, which is currently limited to two hours regardless of hours worked. The pay issue has been ongoing for years, with successive government administrations refusing to address workers' grievances.

Around 1,000 staff work at the government-run MMP. In 2023, they hosted five million visitors, with ticket revenue of 2024 topping €21 million.

Hundreds of overworked Belgian IKEA staff strike for improved pay and conditions

Workers at IKEA stores in Anderlecht, Liège, Ghent, Zaventem and Antwerp, Belgium held wildcat strikes through the week in protest at overwork due to being understaffed. In Liège, IKEA used a court injunction and police intervention to stop workers from picketing the store

entrance.

The CNE Commerce, ABBV, ACV Puls and SETCa union members say sick or older workers, who leave due to the high workloads, are not replaced, and the company no longer attempts to make allowances for workers with family obligations.

Strikes at IKEA for increased wages and improved working conditions have also taken place in Italy, France, and the Netherlands this year. In 2024, the company made €2.2 billion profit, with 72 percent of its sales made in Europe.

Workers in Bosnian coking plant walk out to protest non-payment of wages and benefits

Over 800 workers at the Global Ispat Koksna Industrija Lukavac (GIKIL) coking plant in Lukavac, Bosnia and Herzegovina began a strike October 2, blocking freight entrances and exits at the factory.

The Coking Workers' Union members demand the payment of salaries and social contributions for August and pension contributions unpaid since March. They also want answers from the government on job security at the allegedly near-bankrupt company.

Construction workers at Sellafield, UK walk out over hazard pay

More than 1,500 workers at the Sellafield nuclear site in Cumbria, England, walked out on October 4 over pay. The walkout is due to last until October 13.

The Unite union members, including electricians, pipefitters, joiners, welders, riggers and groundworkers will also begin an overtime ban from October 14. The highly skilled workers working in a dangerous environment are demanding a hazard allowance.

Unite is calling for negotiations with the employer at government conciliation service Acas—a sure-fire way of pushing through a substandard deal.

The largest nuclear site in Europe, Sellafield's main functions are processing and storing nuclear waste and nuclear decommissioning.

Iran: Taftan gold miners protest conditions

Baluchi gold miners at the Taftan mine in southeastern Iran protested September 27 against exploitation and corruption.

The miners accuse managers and contractors of pocketing huge profits while they are treated as a cheap, disposable labour force. They say officials and executives systematically exclude local workers from meaningful employment, leaving them only low-wage, temporary and unsafe positions.

They also condemned the environmental destruction of mining activities. Mining has depleted water resources and endangered local communities through pollution and disease. Residents of Alavijeh, Isfahan clashed with security forces on October 3 during a similar protest against destruction of the local environment by mining operations.

When the Taftan workers protested at their conditions, a senior HR officer from the Pars Tamin contracting company reportedly told them "Even your base salary is more than you deserve."

Nationwide protests continue across Iran at wages, pensions and conditions

Ongoing protests at low wages and pensions and deteriorating conditions continue across Iran.

On October 5, retirees protested that their pensions are all but worthless, with demonstrations in cities from Kermanshah and Shush to Tehran. Protestors in Isfahan chanted "We have seen no justice, only lies."

Bakers in Mashhad demonstrated for the fourth time on October 5. They are protesting subsidies unpaid for three months, leaving them unable to eat or work. A South Khorasan baker said, "We provide people's bread, but we ourselves have no bread for the night."

The crisis is hitting every sector of Iran, with staff at the Mahrdom Hospital in Tehran coming out on strike at the non-payment of their wages for two months.

Students at Tehran's Khajeh Nasir University have now held four consecutive nights of protest at the monetisation of basic services, resulting in rising dormitory and food costs. Families in the Pars housing complex of Jam County protested October 4 at the lack of public schools. They say they must either pay extortionate fees for private education or abandon the education of their children. They have been protesting for six months, and say no official was even present at the offices to hear their demands.

Tractor drivers in Dezful protested last week at cuts to their fuel rations, which prevent them earning a living. Residents of Behrbagh, Bushehr province protested October 4 at critical water shortages.

Living conditions continue to deteriorate and the economy is collapsing. The situation has been exacerbated further by the "snapback" reimposition of UN sanctions. This is part of the US/NATO's restructuring of the Middle East as a prelude to war against China.

Anti-government protests in Morocco met with live fire by police

Anti-government protests against the poor state of public services have rocked Morocco for more than 10 nights, and are continuing.

Two people were killed October 1, when officers opened fire on a group of people near a police station in Lqlia near the coastal city of Agadi. Security forces have killed three protesters and injured many more. The government demanded police make mass arrests, then announced reforms to quell the upsurge.

The group leading the protests, Gen Z 212, was inspired by recent youth-led protests in Nepal that brought down the government within days. They

posted their demands online, calling for the prime minister's resignation and accusing the government of wasting billions on infrastructure for the World Cup while neglecting hospitals, schools and essential services.

A prominent banner held by protesters said "At least the FIFA stadium will have a first aid kit. Our hospitals don't."

The protests were ignited by the deaths of eight women due to give birth at a hospital in Agadir, who died due to a lack of staff and the required equipment.

Nigerian oil union calls off strike over mass sackings

National industrial action by Nigerian oil workers, which began September 28 after the dismissal of more than 800 workers at Dangote Refinery, was called off on October 1.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria said that although it was not satisfied with the terms of the five-point agreement and strongly doubted that Dangote would honour its terms, it would show its "good faith" by suspending the strike.

Kenyan lecturers continue stoppage for a third week to demand salary arrears

Kenyan lecturers are on strike for a third week. They have vowed not to return to work until arrears of KSh 7.9 billion have been paid in full.

Students affected by the strike issued an ultimatum to the government demanding they settle the strike and remove the threat over their graduation timelines.

Protest march in Cape Town, South Africa demands fair wages and job security

Hundreds marched through Cape Town Central Business District, South Africa on Tuesday demanding higher wages, permanent employment and workers' rights.

The march was organised by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to mark International Day for Decent Work, with marches planned in other parts of the country. Memorandums were handed in to the Western Cape Provincial legislature and the national African National Congress (ANC) government. COSATU is part of the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and South African Communist Party.

Appealing to the ANC government is a dead-end policy, to quell rising unrest in the working class and youth against rising poverty. The government is presiding over an unemployment rate of 33 percent—among 15-34- year-olds the official rate is 45.5 percent—and insecure employment through government cheap labour schemes. At the same time, it is whipping up anti-immigrant chauvinism. According to the World Bank, South Africa is the most unequal country in the world.

Ugandan union local tells workers to defy national civil servants' strike

Civil servants in Uganda went on strike October 1 in response to the government's failure to increase their pay as promised.

The Uganda Local Government Workers' Union noted that teachers had not benefited from the extra resources allocated to the sector, and only 10.7 percent of the total wage bill was going to civil servants. A strike notice was sent to the government on September 18, but no pay rise was forthcoming.

However, the union local in Kitagwenda District told its members to continue working. Kitagwenda union officials claim they oppose the disruption caused by the strike, holding that the government has shown its willingness to reach an agreement.



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