

# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

23 October 2025

*The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.*

## Italian refuse collection workers in national strike for improved pay and conditions

Thousands of waste collection workers throughout Italy held a 24-hour strike October 17 to force municipal and subcontracted private employers to come to a new national employment agreement and pay rise.

The Uil Transport, Fp Cgil, Fit Cisl and Fiadel union members demand a 16 percent salary increase commensurate with the rising cost of living, a review of pay scales and greater health and safety measures.

## Thousands of teachers strike for better pay and working conditions in Cantabria, Spain

Full and staggered strikes of early years, primary and secondary school teachers in the autonomous community of Cantabria, Spain took place over five days this week. On Thursday, a mass demonstration was held in regional capital, Santander.

The CCOO, STEC, UGT and ANPE union members demand salary increases, lower classroom ratios, fewer administration tasks and more classroom cover when needed. They also call for an end to a legal clause whereby pay rises are completely conditional upon regional budget approval.

## Coca Cola workers in Germany strike for pay increase

On Monday, 1,200 Coca Cola workers at three bottling plants and a distribution site in Northern Germany held a 24-hour warning strike for increased wages and held a rally in Bremen. Further stoppages are planned at all 24 Coca Cola locations across Germany, employing 6,000, if there is no movement in the employer's negotiating position.

The last round of talks in September foundered when a 1.6 percent pay increase was offered. The Food, Beverages and Catering Union members demand 5 percent, with €150 basic extra.

Coca Cola's gross profits globally in the year to June 2025 were \$28.9 billion, with Germany its largest European market.

## Sacked textile workers in Tokat, Turkey demand back pay and reinstatement

Hundreds of dismissed textile workers at clothing manufacturers ??k Makas (Chic Scissors), part of Cross Textiles, in Tokat, Turkey have been demonstrating for back pay outside the factory since October 6. On Saturday, they marched through the city but were blocked from entering the main square by police.

The United Textile Weaving and Leather Workers Union members, who have not been paid for three months, are not eligible for unemployment benefits as they were sacked for alleged thefts and other infringements, which they deny. The workers say the finances of the company and the consequent threat of redundancies is constantly used by management to discourage them from making pay demands.

Cross Textiles, which employs 8,000 workers at two factories in Turkey and one in Egypt, makes clothing for global brands such as Levi's, H&M, Jack Jones and Zara. In 2023, Turkey exported \$38.6 billion in textiles and was the fourth-largest exporter globally.

## Striking National Coal Mining Museum workers reject latest pay offer

Workers at the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, England are continuing their stoppage begun mid-August, after rejecting the latest pay offer. The strike will continue to November 9.

Museum management offered a paltry £1 an hour rise for specialist museum guides such as fitters and electricians, and 5 percent or 80p an hour for other staff. Some workers earn just £12.60 an hour. The Unison union revised down its initial claim for a £2.50 uplift to £1 an hour or 5 percent, whichever was greater.

Many of the 40 workers were former miners involved in the bitter year-long strike in 1984/85. The Trades Union Congress refused to call a general strike at the time, leaving the miners isolated. This led to the decimation of the industry.

Labour majority-run Wakefield council is withholding government funding for the museum until the dispute is settled. While the museum is open to the public, underground tours are not available.

## Support staff at London school walk out to defend jobs

Support staff at a school in Camden, London walked out October 14-16 over restructuring which threatens job cuts.

The Unison members at Richard Cobden Primary school face the loss of 30 jobs, with the remaining teaching assistants taking on more work for no extra pay. The support staff are crucial in aiding the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

SEND provision is at crisis point due to successive government funding cuts, and shortage of specialist staff like speech and language therapists. Mainstream schools in England have suffered budget cuts of £4.2 billion since 2010. The Starmer-led Labour government is proposing SEND reforms but no extra finance.

### **Protests over pensions and living conditions continue across Iran**

Nurses and healthcare workers held rallies at the weekend in Ahvaz and Kermanshah, Iran over pay and conditions. Nurses report earning 15-35 million tomans per month, leaving many below the official poverty line of 20 million tomans. Workloads are increasing, and nurses report nine months of unpaid bonuses for nursing tariffs. It is estimated that around 2,500 nurses leave Iran annually because of these conditions.

Workers at the Petrochemical Complex in Ilam protested at the failure of contracting company Kehrubatavan to pay their wages. In the capital Tehran, former employees of state broadcaster IRIB held a rally over unpaid dues. Victims of a large-scale vehicle fraud scheme in Sistan and Baluchestan province protested months of official inaction outside the governor's office in Fanuj. Bakers in Mashhad and Tehran continue their protests over non-payment of bread subsidies.

Pensioners in several sectors also continued their ongoing protests. Telecommunications retirees held demonstrations in Tehran, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Tabriz, Shiraz, Ahvaz and other cities. They accuse the major shareholders of the privatised Telecommunications Company of Iran of plundering their pension funds and ignoring their legal obligations. They demand full implementation of pension regulations and the restoration of their supplementary health insurance.

Oil industry retirees protested outside the Ministry of Oil building in Tehran. Demanding implementation of the pension equalisation plan, they are protesting the failure to pay retirement bonuses in full and the privatisation of health and medical services. Retired steel industry workers also protested in Isfahan.

Social Security pensioners held demonstrations in several cities. They demand free healthcare and pension adjustments, as stipulated under the Social Security Law, and the right to a decent standard of living.

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.

### **Morocco and Tunisia rocked by demonstrations**

Morocco has been rocked by continuing demonstrations in more than a dozen cities. It is the latest African country to be shaken by "Gen Z" protests against poverty, inequality and corruption.

A collective called Gen Z 212, with 180,000 members, is behind the demonstrations, but other groups are also springing up fast. Anger has erupted over government spending on stadiums on the 2030 FIFA World Cup while the health system is in a state of decay. There are plans to spend more than \$5 billion on infrastructure bound up with the World Cup.

As the country spends billions on infrastructure and tourism, unemployment for those aged 15-24 has risen to 36 percent. Over half the population of Morocco is under 35.

In Tunisia, thousands marched in the southern coastal city of Gabes in mid-October, calling for the closure of a phosphate processing plant they say is behind a rise in gas poisonings and other health problems.

Over 200 people were hospitalised within weeks for respiratory distress and poisoning by gas, said authorities and NGOs. Videos circulated online of children having breathing issues.

Police arrested dozens of the demonstrators. Khayreddine Debaya, coordinator of the local campaign group Stop Pollution, said that "over 100 people were taken into custody," with some taken from their homes.

### **Union sabotages Ugandan teachers' pay strike**

Ugandan teachers have been on strike since the beginning of the school term to demand better pay, as well as improved working conditions and allowances. They oppose the government having raised salaries only for science teachers but not for those of arts and humanities subjects.

The Uganda National Teachers' Union, however, is now instructing the strikers to return to work without any resolution of their grievances, based on the empty promise of a parliamentary debate on the issue.

"We have heard promises before that never materialised. This time, we want to see action, not words," said a teacher following a union meeting.

### **Health workers in Edo State, Nigeria hold warning strike, but union caves in after governor's threats**

Health workers in Edo State, Nigeria began a seven-day warning strike on October 17, protesting government inaction on pay and other issues.

The state governor Monday Okpebholo denounced the strikers as irresponsible and accused them of going against the Hippocratic Oath. The State Council of the Medical and Health Workers Union then called off the stoppage on October 19, without any change in the state government's position, amidst claims that they had shown their readiness to "address" the strikers' demands.

### **Further protests in Johannesburg by South African workers on cheap labour scheme demanding permanent jobs**

On Monday, around 200 South African workers on the Expanded Public Works Scheme (EPWS) marched to the Johannesburg Social Housing Company and the office of the Gauteng provincial premier, where they submitted a memorandum demanding permanent employment.

The Independent Liberation and Allied Workers Union members were joined by supporters from the Johannesburg Social Housing Company and former EPWS workers. Contracts for the EPWS workers at Sawubona Mhlali Service Delivery Brigades ran out on August 31. The Gauteng social development department told them to look for other work or start their own businesses. Cleaners from the housing company said their contracts had previously been renewed annually but had now been terminated.

EPWS is an African National Congress government scheme exploiting

the jobless as cheap labour, supposedly to help them back into permanent work. Established in 2003, it provides six or twelve-month contracts, repeatedly renewed for 10 years. Unemployment in South Africa stands at 33.2 percent. For 15-24-year-olds it is 62.4 percent.

The previous week saw a protest by 60 youth outside the City of Ekurhuleni offices demanding jobs as cleaners.



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