

# 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 Greek train workers strike over poor working conditions and safety at national operator, Hellenic Train

Train drivers, crew and administrative workers at Hellenic Train, Greece held a nationwide 24-hour strike on Tuesday in protest over safety, chronic staff shortages and deteriorating infrastructure.

The Hellenic Train Workers' Union and Panhellenic Railway Federation members demand more staff, modernisation of the rail system and improved working conditions. Privately-owned Hellenic Train manages the majority of the Greek rail network and was held partly responsible for the 2023 Tempi train collision, when 57 died.

Post-privatisation, Greece's rail network is one of the most dangerous in Europe. From 2018 to 2020 the country recorded the highest railway fatality rate per million train kilometres among 28 European nations.

## Tens of thousands of teachers in French-speaking Belgium stop work to protest education cuts

Up to 120,000 teachers in schools of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, part of the Wallonia-Brussels federation, walked out November 10 in protest at government austerity cuts in education. Demonstrations were held in Brussels, Liège, Charleroi and other cities.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions and other union members oppose measures such as increased working hours without pay, reduced sick leave allowance and changes to pensions and early retirement rules. Another strike day is planned for November 25.

## Public doctors in Spain strike nationwide for improved salaries, hours and working conditions

Over 2,000 doctors across Spain stopped work November 15 and marched in capital city, Madrid and other cities. They are protesting a proposed framework statute they say fails to recognise their crucial contribution to the public health service and has led to a chronic shortage of doctors.

The Spanish Confederation of Medical Unions and the Andalusian Medical Union members demand that any new legislation stipulates

higher salaries, improvements in working hours and other benefits that will acknowledge their professional status.

They plan four more strikes and demonstration marches on December 9-12 if the government does not meet their demands.

## Refuse collection workers in Paris and Caen la Mer, France strike for better pay and working conditions

Hundreds of waste collectors at the City of Paris municipality have been on indefinite strike since November 12, demanding pay and conditions equivalent to privately employed workers in other districts of Paris.

In one district, the mayor used police to break up the General Confederation of Labour union pickets and employed private services to clear waste from the streets. He insists that City of Paris municipal collections, like the other city districts, ought to be outsourced to private companies.

Elsewhere in France, waste workers in Caen la Mer, Normandy walked out Monday to demand their pay matches that of contracted-out workers in neighbouring Caen urban district.

## Continuing strikes at several UK universities by academic staff opposing job cuts

Academic staff at various UK universities are striking this week against job cuts.

University and College Union (UCU) members at Nottingham university were on strike this week, with further stoppages planned for the next three weeks. According to UCU, 650 jobs have already gone, with a further 200 slated for elimination.

UCU members at the University of Sheffield were on strike four days this week with further stoppages planned over the next three weeks. The University of Sheffield is planning to impose £5 million in cuts over five academic areas and professional services.

UCU members at Sheffield Hallam also walked between Monday and Thursday, with a further planned stoppage December 1-5. Hallam has lost over 670 posts since 2024, with 80 more planned to go.

Stoppages are planned for November 27-28 at Lancaster University, where UCU members are taking action short of striking over the threat to jobs. Lancaster is seeking to eliminate 400 posts, including 200 academic posts by July 2026.

At the University of the Highlands and Islands, composed of 10 campuses including Inverness, UCU members were on strike Monday and Tuesday against planned £2 million job cuts.

In all these disputes, the UCU's main sticking point is compulsory job cuts, as they accept job severances on a voluntary basis, leading to devastating cuts to courses. Job losses are a threat across many UK universities, but the UCU is leaving these disputes isolated.

After several years of job losses, the UCU called a nationwide industrial action ballot in October, running to November 28. No unified action will take place this year with the union saying on that a "successful result will pave the way for strike action at all 137 campuses in the new year."

### **Strike continues by phlebotomists in Gloucester, UK over pay banding**

Monday marked the 236th day of strike action by around 35 phlebotomists (blood takers) working for Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

The Unison union members based at the Gloucestershire Royal and Cheltenham General hospitals have been on strike since March. Unison designated it the longest-running stoppage in National Health Service (NHS) history.

A rally in support of the strikers was held on Monday at Shire Hall in Gloucester, addressed by Trades Union Congress General Secretary Paul Nowak. The TUC, alongside the health service unions, have overseen the creeping privatisation of the NHS and existential funding cuts, and oppose unified action across all sectors in its defence.

The phlebotomists are currently on pay band 2. They say that because of the skill sets needed to take blood they should be paid on the higher band 3, or an extra £1.09 an hour. According to Unison, this would cost the trust around £60,000 a year, about a quarter of the trust's chief executive's annual pay.

### **Further strike by fuel tanker drivers at Scottish firm over pay**

Fuel tanker drivers working for the Grangemouth-based firm Turners (Soham) Limited in Scotland walked out Monday and Tuesday. They are also set to strike Thursday and Friday.

The Unite union members, who have taken previous action, are protesting a 2025 pay offer of only 1 percent. The current strike follows the breakdown of talks brokered by government mediation service Acas. The latest offer from Turners, of 1 percent for this year followed by a 2026 offer based on the lower Consumer Price Index inflation rate in January next year, was rejected by the drivers.

The stoppage is expected to impact aviation fuel deliveries to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports.

### **Iranian nurses continue action over pay and conditions**

Nurses in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad held a three-day stoppage last week. They held a protest outside the headquarters of the Mashhad University of Medical Sciences.

Among their demands was payment of wages arrears, payment of allowances due, a narrowing of the pay gap between them and doctors, more staff and for a lessening of their workload due to staff shortages.

Many newly qualified nurses in Iran choose to work abroad because of

the poor working conditions. It is estimated around 3,000 nurses emigrate each year.

The same issues face nurses across Iran, and there have been nurses' protests in Ahvaz, Kermanshah, Sanandaj, Tabriz and Yasouj over recent weeks.

Health workers, workers across the sectors and retirees are involved in ongoing struggles against worsening living conditions as the economy collapses. US and EU sanctions only exacerbate their plight. The US and NATO are seeking to destabilise Iran and the region as they prepare for trade and military war against China.

### **Nigerian health workers join resident doctors in national strike over abysmal health care funding**

The national stoppage of 11,500 resident doctors in Nigeria was joined by other health workers on November 14. The doctors have been on strike for around three weeks.

Doctors and Joint Health Sector Unions and Assembly of Healthcare Professional Associations members are angry about unpaid arrears, poor working conditions, inadequate staffing, intolerable workloads and the lack of the medical infrastructure essential for saving lives.

The Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors stated on X/Twitter, "We demand the immediate conclusion of the CBA [Collective Bargaining Agreement] and review of the outdated CONMESS [Consolidated Medical Salary Structure]."

### **Electricity workers in Imo, Nigeria strike in protest at police raid**

Electricity workers in Imo State, Nigeria launched a protest strike that caused power outages, with parts of the state plunged into darkness.

The strike was prompted by a November 15 raid by armed police on the Egbu Transmission Substation in Owerri, the state capital, aimed at intimidating workers against taking industrial action.

In a November 16 statement, the Acting General Secretary of the National Union of Electricity Employees, Dominic Igwebuikpe said that heavily armed police had stormed the substation, assaulting workers there and forcing staff at gunpoint to open the breakers, causing the state's power supply to shut down.

Igwebuikpe said police vandalised "critical control equipment [and] destroyed staff property," including mobile phones and laptops. They disabled the CCTV cameras before kidnapping some workers, taking them to an undisclosed location. The police denied any assault had taken place.

Over 85 million people in Nigeria have no access to the national electricity grid due to decades of underinvestment.

### **Parliamentary workers in many states in Nigeria shut down state assemblies over pay and conditions**

On November 15, parliamentary activities were paralysed at the Bauchi State House of Assembly and many others due to a nationwide strike by parliamentary workers to demand Consolidated Legislative Salary Structure (CONLESS) implementation and better working conditions.

Meanwhile, workers at the Anambra State House of Assembly complex

barricaded it with placards and joined the nationwide strike.

### **E-hailing taxi drivers in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Municipality, South Africa walk out over super-exploitation**

Taxi drivers went on strike in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Municipality in South Africa and marched to the city hall in Gqeberha.

The action is part of a national campaign against the e-hailing companies. The National E-Hailing Federation of South Africa members are protesting lack of safety, low earnings and fares that can be less than the petrol cost of a journey. The safety issues concern attacks from other taxi drivers who fear they are being undercut.

Unemployment in South Africa reached 31.9 percent in the first quarter of 2025, creating desperate conditions. The African National Congress/Democratic Alliance coalition government presides over the highest income inequality in the world.



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