

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.

Tens of thousands in Bulgaria protest government corruption and draft budget

Tens of thousands of workers, including many young people, protested in Sofia, Bulgaria on Monday against the 2026 draft budget and accusations of government corruption. Smaller demonstrations took place in the cities of Plovdiv and Varna.

Public, transport, postal and other workers belonging to The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria held nationwide protests November 24 for pay increases and better working conditions.

Thousands of French workers strike and protest austerity budget

Thousands of workers across France, including teachers, civil servants and transport workers held strikes and rallies Tuesday to oppose the 2026 proposed budget.

The CGT, FSU and Solidaires union members demand an end to job cuts, the public sector pay and pension freeze and the doubling of health insurance contributions.

French workers for EssilorLuxottica strike for pay increase

Hundreds of workers at luxury spectacle-making giant EssilorLuxottica in France, which employs 9,000, held a three-day work stoppage November 27-29. Staff walked out at office, factory and distribution sites throughout the country, including Nantes, Toulouse and Dijon.

The CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC and other union members demand double the 1-2 percent pay award offered by the company. The largest eyewear maker in the world owns or manufactures for scores of designer brands such as Rayban, Oakley, and Foster Grant. Revenue for the first nine months of 2025 was €20.9 billion.

Further stoppage by Sellafield nuclear workers in Cumbria, England over hazard pay

Around 1,500 construction workers, employed as electricians, joiners, pipefitters, riggers, groundworkers, welders and painters at Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria, England are on strike this week and next. It is the latest round of action begun in September.

They are demanding payment of a premium for working in hazardous environments in line with construction workers employed on nuclear sites such as Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C.

The Unite union members are employed by around 35 subcontractors at Sellafield. They voted by a 90 percent majority for industrial action in August. Classed as “nuclear professionals,” they work on decommissioning technologies as well as constructing new projects. They are employed under the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry and Construction Industry Joint Council Working Rule Agreements.

Cumbria Police have issued orders under section 12 of the Public Order Act 1986 that any marches undertaken by the striking pickets must not start before 7am and must finish by 10am. Previously the pickets have held slow marches taking up to six hours, the so-called “Sellafield Shuffle.”

Bosch workers in Scotland set to strike over pay-slashing contract changes

Around 280 workers at the Bosch Rexroth hydraulic equipment plant in Glenrothes, Scotland are due to begin a week-long strike opposing new contracts that sharply reduce pay and overhaul working hours. The stoppage is due to start at 06:00am on December 8 and is scheduled to end at 05:59am on December 15, following a ballot in which the members of the union Unite voted 95 percent voted for strike action.

The dispute centres on the company’s plan to impose flexible short time working. A Bosch Rexroth spokesman said the new proposals were “essential to provide the necessary flexibility to respond to market fluctuations”.

Workers could lose up to 40 percent of their take-home pay—around £1,000 per month—through changes to their terms and conditions. Management is also seeking to introduce annualised hours, enabling the firm to vary working time across the year and place employees as much as 70 hours “in debt”, with pay clawed back if more hours are paid than worked.

The attack on jobs and incomes at Glenrothes plant in the Fife region of Scotland—which engineer’s parts for the building industry including gears, brakes and components for forklift trucks—is part of a wider restructuring drive by Bosch. The German based engineering and technology transnational reduced its global workforce by 11,600 to 418,000 between 2023-4 and is seeking to implement up to 22,000 job losses in Germany.

The contract changes at Glenrothes give management sweeping control

over staffing levels and scheduling, introducing gig-economy working practices which undermine stable incomes and employment.

Rail workers at UK company set to strike over pay and conditions

Rail workers employed by Cross Country train operating company are set to walk out on Saturday. Cross Country serves the west coast area of the UK from Scotland down to southwest England.

The Rail Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members have been in a long-running dispute over several issues including pay, staffing and the company's refusal to honour previous agreements. These agreements include overtime payments, staff levels and wage discrepancies for different grades.

A planned stoppage for November 1 was suspended for further negotiations which failed to reach resolution, leading the RMT to announce the current planned action. Further stoppages are planned for December 13, 20 and 27 over the busy Christmas holiday season.

Strike by frozen food storage workers in Lincolnshire, England to hit Christmas turkey supplies

Workers at the UK's Magnavale frozen food storage company in Easton, Lincolnshire began a two-week stoppage Monday. The site, which employs around 100, packs and stores food for concerns such as Bernard Matthews and the 2 Sister Food Group.

The GMB members are protesting not having been made a pay offer this year. The stoppage at the site, described as the "UK frozen turkey capital," is expected to hit supplies of turkeys to retail outlets in the run-up to Christmas.

In a separate dispute, around 50 GMB members at the KP Snacks manufacturing facility in Billingham in northeast England voted by an 85 percent majority to walk out. They are protesting being given extra duties and responsibilities with no commensurate pay increase. In response to the vote, the company halted all leave requests.

No dates were announced, but a stoppage at the facility could affect the supply of savoury snacks such as Hula Hoops and McCoy's crisps.

Iranian workers' protests continue as economy in crisis

The crisis hitting the Iranian economy continues to escalate, with the currency exchange reaching \$1 to Rials 1.2 million by midweek. According to reports from Tehran, prices for essential food items tripled overnight. Workers are responding with ongoing protests.

Sunday saw workers at the Madkoush Steel Company in Bandar Abbas walk out over months of unpaid wages. The same day, workers at the ISOICO Shipbuilding complex in Hormozgan refused to work and gathered to protest non-payment of wages and insurance contributions.

In Shush, Sunday marked the second day of protests by Middle East Sugar Factory workers, who are not being paid the rate for the job. They also demanded the reinstatement of previously sacked colleagues.

Social Security and Steel industry retirees held rallies in the cities of Ahvaz, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Shush and Tehran protesting their inadequate pensions.

Tehran also saw a protest by victims of the "King Money" cryptocurrency scam, involving around 4,000 plaintiffs left out of pocket by around £198 million.

In Ahvaz, students at Chamran University's HoveyzeH campus protested over the inedible nature of dormitory meals.

The unfolding collapse of the Iranian economy is being exacerbated by US and NATO sanctions aimed at Iran's destabilisation in preparation for trade and military war against China.

Union suspends Nigerian doctors' strike over pay, conditions and funding

Nigerian doctors, on strike for 29 days, are being told to go back to work by the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD). The decision to end the stoppage was taken at an "extraordinary" National Executive Council meeting held November 29.

The resident doctors walked out over unpaid arrears, poor working conditions, inadequate staffing, intolerable workloads and the lack of the medical infrastructure essential for saving lives.

NARD President Muhammad Suleiman said the strike has been "suspended" for four weeks. Only a few days earlier, NARD was insisting the strike would continue due to the government's failure to meet the union's demands.

Other Nigerian health workers are continuing their own strike over the pay structure and longstanding welfare issues. President of the Nigeria Labour Congress Joe Ajaero stated that "the government treats signed collective bargaining agreements as worthless pieces of paper."

Employees in Free State, South Africa regulating gambling, tourism and liquor walk out over unpaid rises

Employees of the Free State Gambling, Liquor and Tourism Authority in South Africa are continuing their stoppage, begun November 24. The 120 workers picketed outside Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs in Bloemfontein.

The National Education Health and Allied Workers Union members are demanding salary increases outstanding since 2023-24. Increases of 5 percent and 2.5 percent remain unpaid. Workers rejected an offer for 2025-26 of 2.1 percent for workers earning under R600,000 and 4.8 percent for those earning above that figure.



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