

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Thousands of Greek workers strike in protest at austerity budget

Thousands of teachers, doctors, municipal and other public sector workers in Greece held a national one-day strike Tuesday. Hundreds rallied outside the parliament buildings in Athens as the proposed budget for next year was debated.

The Civil Servants Confederation, Panhellenic Federation of Local Government Employees, Central Union of Municipalities of Greece and other union members' demands include pay increases, greater public funding and relief measures against inflation.

Farmers in Greece have also protested for several weeks by blocking roads at border crossing points. They demand unpaid subsidies, which have been frozen while an investigation against alleged corruption is being conducted.

Francophone workers in Belgium in general strike against community government austerity cuts

Thousands of workers in the French-speaking community of Belgium, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, held demonstrations and strikes Monday to protest austerity measures in the French Community Government budget.

The General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium members, including workers from schools, nurseries, libraries and other municipal services, organised marches through Brussels and other cities.

There are three community governments in Belgium, based on the Flemish-, French- and German-speaking communities, plus the federal government.

Staff at the Louvre museum in Paris, France strike for improvements in pay and conditions

Four hundred workers, including gallery staff, ticket office workers and security personnel at the Louvre in Paris, France went on strike Monday to Wednesday. They are protesting poor pay and working conditions at the understaffed and overcrowded art museum.

The CGT, CFDT and SUD union members previously held a wildcat

stoppage last June, after management failed to listen to their concerns over disrepair and a lack of government funding. They pointed out that state subsidies for the institution declined by 20 percent in the last 10 years.

Hospital theatre staff at Leeds hospitals, England to walk out over back pay claim

Hospital operating theatre assistants at four hospitals run by the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust plan a 48-hour walkout at 8am on Thursday.

The Unison union members voted 100 percent on a 75 percent turnout for the action. The staff have been in dispute for over a year about their pay grade. They argue that for performing such duties as inserting cannulas, collecting samples and sterilising equipment they should be paid at a higher rate. The NHS Trust agreed but will only backdate the award a year. The theatre assistants are demanding back pay to April 2021.

Similar staff at other NHS Trusts have been awarded back payments to April 2021. Earlier this year, staff working for Calderdale and Huddersfield Trust were awarded a five-year back pay deal.

The strikers will picket the entrance to Leeds General Infirmary (LGI). Their two days of stoppages will overlap with the five-day national stoppage of residential doctors, who are holding a picket at LGI on Wednesday.

In a separate dispute, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) nurses working for Bassetlaw hospital began a five-day stoppage Monday. The Unite union members are fighting "fire and rehire" plans that would see ICU nurses having to rotate between Bassetlaw and Doncaster Royal Infirmary. They argue that they would face long commutes after completing 13-hour shifts.

They began action short of striking on December 13 by refusing to work on any ward and unit other than at Bassetlaw. The nurses fear the move is part of plans to eventually decommission the ICU at Bassetlaw.

UK microbiology staff at Airedale hospital in Yorkshire, to walk out over pay grade and imposed extra duties

Microbiology staff working at Airedale hospital, near Keighly are set to walk out on Thursday until December 25.

The Unite union members say their pay band does not match their skill set, that they should be on a higher pay band. They are also protesting increased night and weekend call-outs. They say the increase is the result of the trust agreeing to undertake tests for another trust, which was imposed without consultation.

The hospital saw a strike by around 150 support staff in September and October employed by trust-owned outsourced company AGH Solutions. The GMB members were fighting for parity of pay and conditions with staff employed directly by the NHS. The dispute ended with a GMB-imposed inferior deal.

Teaching assistants at London school walk out in pay grading dispute

Teaching assistants (TAs) at the Richard Cobden primary school in the London borough of Camden began a four-day stoppage Monday.

The Unison union members are demanding to be paid on the higher level 4, rather than their current level 3 pay scale. TAs at other local schools are on the level 4 pay scale. The current action follows recent three- and four-day stoppages. The strikes were sparked by restructuring that led to some roles being phased out and an increasing workload. The school has a high number of children with special educational needs.

Continuing cost-of-living protests sweep Iran

Protests continue to sweep Iran in response to the ongoing economic crisis. Saturday evening saw demonstrations by students at Tehran university over the increasing cost of food and accommodation.

On Sunday, steel industry and Social Security Organisation retirees held coordinated protests in Ahvaz, Isfahan, Kermanshah and Shush. They were protesting how inflation and high prices were impacting their meagre pensions.

In Khuzestan, contract workers at the North and South Azadegan oil fields held a rally against plans to privatise the state-run Arvandan Oil and Gas Company. They fear it will lead to job losses and job insecurity.

Monday saw big protests by Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI) retirees across dozens of cities including Ahvaz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tehran. They were protesting the failure of the privatised TCI to uphold its legal duty to maintain the value of their pensions. They say privatisation has meant funds being funnelled into entities controlled by the country's political leadership, at their expense.

Health workers were also involved in protests, with staff at the Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences protesting unpaid wages. Nurses at the Fatemeh Zahra hospital in Minudasht went on strike over the failure of the hospital to pay outstanding allowances in full.

Wednesday marked the fourth day of a strike by gold miners at the Zarshuran gold mine in Takab, one of the biggest gold mines in the Middle East. The strikers accuse management of discriminating against local workers. They say the Ariana Company which manages the mine is controlled by Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) which favours workers with IRGC connections. They say the IRGC connected workers get higher pay and increased benefits.

The collapse of the Iranian economy is being exacerbated by US and NATO sanctions. US imperialism's goal is hegemony in the Middle East, and Iran's destabilisation is central to this as part of its escalating conflict with China.

Nigerian health workers continue strike over pay and conditions, as unions prepare sellout

Nigerian health workers are continuing their strike begun in November over the failure to implement a new salary structure, as well as welfare and other issues.

The Joint Health Sector Unions and the Assembly of Healthcare Professional Associations claim they recently "discovered that the government has not shown sufficient commitment to address these current factors [such as welfare]." They said they were narrowing their demands, however, to one "priority condition" of implementing the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS), the official pay scale for health professionals other than doctors.

The unions claim "the majority of our welfare issues and allowances revolve around" the salary structure. However, they are emulating the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors, who suspended the doctors' strike on the basis of a partial settlement and empty promises.

Egyptian journalists' ongoing strike over low pay

Egyptian journalists and media workers employed by Al-Bawabah News have been on strike since November 17 over poverty levels of pay well below the official minimum wage.

The average monthly salary of a journalist at Al-Bawabah News is only 2,000 Egyptian pounds. They are demanding this be increased to the minimum wage for public sector employees, set in September this year at 7,000 Egyptian pounds.

Judiciary staff in Kogi, Nigeria continue their strike despite threats from State Governor

Judicial staff in Kogi State are continuing their strike begun December 4 over unmet promises, including pay arrears from October 2024 and bonuses from earlier this year.

The governor of Kogi State allegedly threatened to ban the Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria unless the stoppage ends.



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