

# 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 of doctors across Spain strike for better pay, hours and working conditions

Thousands of doctors across Spain began a 48-hour strike Wednesday to demand statutory changes to their terms and conditions that will recognise their responsibilities as professional physicians and the unique demands put upon them.

175,000 doctors were called to strike across the country, holding demonstrations and protest marches in Madrid, Asturias, Galicia, Murcia, Valencia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Navarra and many other autonomous communities.

The doctors want statutory recognition of their profession through improved salaries, a 35-hour working week and for hours above that to attract the same pension and holiday payments as basic hours. They also want their civil servant professional classification to consider the extra years of training and specialisation beyond that required of other graduates.

The General Secretary of the Medical Union told press, “We are not recognised as a high-risk profession, despite the fact that we are the group with the highest cancer rate, the highest suicide rate, and one of the highest rates of assault.”

## Italian steelworkers strike over workplace death caused by company negligence

A worker at partly state-owned steel company, Acciaierie d’Italia (formerly known as Ilva), plant in Taranto, Italy fell to his death from a faulty gantry on Monday.

Fim Cisl, Fiom Cgil, and Uilm Uil union members in Taranto and Genoa began an immediate 24-hour strike in protest at the poor health and safety conditions they say caused the accident in the under-resourced plant.

The Italian government is currently looking to attract new investors at Ilva, which was briefly owned by global giant ArcelorMittal. Acciaierie d’Italia has launched a €7bn compensation claim against ArcelorMittal for “mismanagement.” ArcelorMittal is accused of buying the company to deliberately run it down and eliminate it as a competitor.

Thousands of metalworkers and office staff employed by Ilva went on strike November 19 to protest the threat of a proposed 6,000 job losses at the company.

## Non-medical workers at German Red Cross hospitals in Berlin strike for pay increases and reduced hours

Hundreds of employees, including nurses, therapists and ancillary workers at four German Red Cross hospitals and a hospice in Berlin held a 48-hour strike Monday.

The Verdi union members demand shorter working hours of 38.5 per week, a one-off €250 payment and a 5 percent wage increase each year in 2026 and 2027.

## Public waste collectors in Ghent, Belgium strike against attacks on working conditions

Workers at Ivago, an inter-municipal waste management firm based in Ghent, Belgium, began an indefinite strike Monday in protest at a proposed new performance-related pay scheme.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions members say they will be penalised when they are legitimately absent through illness or bereavement. They see the changes as an austerity cost-cutting exercise.

## Strike by Further Education lecturers across England over pay

Lecturers at 17 Further Education (FE) colleges across England began a three-day stoppage over pay on Wednesday.

The University and College Union (UCU) members at 54 colleges were balloted in October last year after rejecting a 4 percent pay offer from employers, the Association of Colleges. Of the 54 colleges, 33 passed the 50 percent turnout threshold. Those taking part voted by over 90 percent for the stoppages.

Since the ballot result was announced several colleges agreed improved pay offers, leaving just 17 colleges due to take part in the stoppage. On Tuesday, Sheffield College UCU branch cancelled the strikes scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday to allow discussion with college management.

FE lecturers earn on average around £9,000 less a year than their secondary school counterparts. The UCU, along with the NEU, GMB, UNISON and Unite unions, is calling for “A New Deal for FE.” Its demands include pay parity with school teachers, a national agreement on workloads and a binding national bargaining framework.

Colleges taking part include Bournemouth and Poole College of FE, City of Liverpool College, Isle of Wight College, Kirklees College and South Bank Colleges. Striking FE lecturers are due to hold a national rally

at the Emmanuel Centre in Westminster, London on Friday from 12 noon.

### **Strike by teachers across 20 schools in West Midlands, England against compulsory redundancies**

Teachers employed by the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership (ATLP) trust at 20 of the 24 schools run by the trust began a two-day walkout on Wednesday. ATLP runs schools in the West Midlands, including schools in Birmingham, Coventry, Staffordshire and Sutton Coldfield.

The National Education Union (NEU) members are taking the action because ATLP says it cannot rule out around 100 compulsory redundancies over the next three years. The trust claims it has “significant overstaffing.” Further stoppages are planned for January 20-22 and 26-29, nine days in total.

In a separate dispute, around 100 NEU members at Little Ilford Secondary school in east London were on strike Tuesday and Wednesday, following a one-day stoppage on January 8. The teachers and support workers voted 100 percent for the walkout to protest excessive workloads. They are scheduled to walk out again from January 20-22.

### **UK Diligenta staff hold one-week stoppage over pay**

Around 1,000 workers employed by financial outsourcer Diligenta at five sites—Edinburgh, Kildean in Stirling, Glasgow, Liverpool and Reading—began a week-long stoppage Monday over pay. They provide call centre, back-office support and complaint services for major financial companies including Lloyds, M&G, Aviva and Phoenix.

The Unite union members previously walked out on November 18 and 28 and December 1, 8 and 9. The initial action in November followed a 2-3 percent imposed pay offer in June last year. The offer, which with RPI inflation at around 4.5 percent represented a real-terms pay cut, was rejected by the workforce. On January 12, Unite announced that Diligenta staff at its Peterborough headquarters would now also be balloted for industrial action.

Diligenta, part of the Tata Consultancy Services global IT group, recorded profits of around £29 million in 2024, averaging over £80,000 from each employee.

### **Special needs transport workers at Leeds city council, UK walk out over safety fears**

Around 80 drivers working for Leeds City Council (LCC) transporting children with special needs and adults with learning difficulties are to walk out Friday. They provide transport to schools, respite placements and community facilities.

The Unite union members, who initially walked out on January 9, are concerned about a deterioration in the service over the last 18 months, for which they blame lack of funding by LCC. They say this has led to injuries to both staff and service users as well as administrative mix-ups. They also blame a lack of vital equipment, inadequate first aid and absence of risk assessments.

Further stoppages are planned for January 23-24, 29-30, then February 4-6, 11-13, 17-20 and 24-27.

### **Transport coordination staff at UK West Yorkshire Combined Authority walk out over pay**

Staff working for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in England held a 24-hour stoppage Monday. They work as frontline staff in IT, as admin and project managers coordinating public transport across the five local authorities in West Yorkshire.

The Unison union members rejected a 3.2 percent pay offer and are seeking 5 percent. They held a 72-hour stoppage in December over the same issue.

In a separate dispute, around 40 Unison union members at the National Mining Museum in Wakefield voted to extend their long-running strike until June 26. They began their action in August last year in a dispute over pay.

### **Student strike in occupied East Jerusalem as Israel restricts access of West Bank teachers**

Around 25,000 Palestinian students in East Jerusalem took part in a one-day strike on Wednesday. Called by the General Secretariat of Christian Educational Institutions, around 15 Christian and other private schools took part.

The strike was called to protest Israel restricting the access of Palestinian teachers from the West Bank into East Jerusalem. Around 150 teachers are affected by the restrictions.

### **Striking Nigerian health workers continue stoppage, defy government intimidation**

Nigerian health workers are continuing their strike, which is now going into a third month.

The Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) members walked out on November 15. JOHESU represents 85 percent of the health sector other than doctors and nurses, including dieticians, physiotherapists, optometrists, radiographer, medical laboratory scientists, medical social workers, clinical psychologists, medical social workers and dental therapists.

Workers want retention allowances and staff transport, as is provided for doctors and nurses, as well as pay demands. The unions narrowed their demands down to implementation of the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS), the official pay scale for health professionals other than doctors.

A majority of workers voted to sustain the strike, rejecting government attempts to intimidate them using the “no work, no pay” rule. The rule is supposed to apply to strikes with no legitimate grievances but has been converted into a means to undermine stoppages when employers refuse to concede legitimate demands.

### **Namibian mill workers striking over pay locked out**

Employees of Namib Mills in Windhoek, Namibia walked out on strike on January 12.

Some of the workers have been employed there since 1989 without receiving any significant salary increase, while others are kept on poverty-level wages.

Striking workers held placards reading “hungry employees feeding the nation,” highlighting what workers complain is the contradiction between their role in food production and the poor living conditions they suffer themselves.

After a strike vote in which the vast majority supported action, Namib Mills issued a press statement confirming they were imposing a temporary lockout of the workers and activated contingency plans to ensure production continues during the strike.



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