

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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Port workers in Europe strike against war and austerity

Dockworkers in Piraeus, Athens and twenty other ports in Greece and the wider Mediterranean held a 24-hour strike February 6. They were protesting at arms shipments to Israel and demanding improved wages, better working conditions and more health and safety measures.

In Piraeus, workers demanded pay increases, shorter hours and recognition of the hazardous nature of their work, while calling for an end to the shipping of military cargos.

Under the banner, “Dockworkers don’t work for war,” strikes and demonstrations took place against arms shipments and the war economy in ports such as Bari, Ancona, Trieste, and Genoa in Italy, Bilbao in Spain and Hamburg in Germany.

Public sector doctors in Northern Cyprus strike over working conditions

Turkish Cypriot doctors in Northern Cyprus held a 24-hour strike February 6 and demonstrated outside a Northern Nicosia hospital to protest conditions in the public health service. These include chronic overwork, payment shortfalls and a specialist doctor shortage.

The Cyprus Turkish Doctors’ Union members said they were unable to meet demand due to a lack of investment by the coalition government and a focus on private healthcare instead. They demand improvements to salaries and pensions, regulations to govern working conditions and increased expenditure on training and infrastructure.

Thousands of outsourced hospital staff in Berlin, Germany strike for equal pay, terms and conditions

Around 2,200 ancillary workers employed by subsidiary companies of the state-owned Vivantes Hospital Group in Berlin, Germany went on strike Monday to demand pay, conditions and benefits commensurate with staff employed directly by the group. They also want to be included in the state employees’ collective bargaining process. Future strike dates are planned.

The Verdi union members, including cleaners, porters, caterers, logistics

and technology staff and other ancillary non-medical workers, were outsourced to subsidiary companies in 2006 as part of cost-cutting measures.

Netherlands Customs and Excise officers in work-to-rule protest against pay freeze

Customs workers at Amsterdam Schiphol airport and the ports of Rotterdam and Vlissingen in the Netherlands held a work-to-rule action Tuesday. Schiphol customs officials checked the luggage of all arrivals between 12 noon and 1.30 p.m., even those with nothing to declare. The nuisance caused was to emphasise the importance of their work.

The AC National Trades Unions, Federation of Dutch Trade Unions and Christian National Trade Union Federation members are protesting a civil servant pay freeze for 2026 with no salary increases or cost of living adjustments.

The unions said that the “genuinely inconvenient” disruption was aimed not at travellers or the airport, but at the government, “which is letting down its own employees.”

There have been other recent civil servant wage protests. Prison staff at Nieuwersluis and De Schie prison, in Rotterdam, have both staged short stoppages. Last week, workers at Rotterdam Detention Centre stopped work for 2.5 hours.

Further go-slows are planned by customs workers without an offer from the government.

Thousands of teachers and lecturers in Romania protest against cuts to education budgets

Thousands of teachers and lecturers demonstrated in Bucharest, Romania on February 4, against the coalition government’s austerity measures contained in a draft budget for education. The workers threaten strike action if the cuts package goes ahead.

A 10 percent funding cut to public education follows previous reductions of 118 million euros and a limit on the use of external revenues generated by universities.

Strikes continue at some UK universities over jobs cull, attacks on pensions and pay

Academic and professional staff at Essex university in England began a seven-day walkout on Thursday against redundancies.

The previous Thursday they held a rally in Southend, joined by students. The University and College Union (UCU) members are fighting management plans to close the Southend campus, axing 200 academic jobs and 200 professional roles. Around 800 students would have to transfer from Southend to Colchester. Unison members are balloting with a view to join the action.

Workers at London Metropolitan University demonstrated February 3, supported by students, against the threat of 120 redundancies across departments including architecture, art, health and social sciences, law and business studies.

At Southampton Solent University, UCU members walked out over pensions. They have a further stoppage planned February 17.

The university forced 286 staff out of the Local Government pension scheme onto a less generous one after transferring their contracts to a subsidiary company, Solent University Services Limited. They would lose £10,000 a year under the inferior scheme. Management threatened those who objected with dismissal.

At Manchester Metropolitan University, Unison members who work in libraries and provide student and technical services walked out and held a picket on Tuesday, after rejecting a 1.4 percent pay offer.

Unite members at Imperial College, London resumed strike action February 10 over a 2 percent pay offer. The 1,200 workers plan further walkouts on February 12, 16 and 24.

The UCU, Unite and Unison are a barrier to unified action by their members in universities and further education colleges and education workers across the UK, who face thousands of job cuts, and attacks on pay and pensions.

Special needs teaching assistants at Lift Schools Academy in Essex strike over pay

Special needs teaching assistants employed by Lift Schools in Essex walked out for seven days from February 5 over pay. Lift is a multi-academy trust running 57 schools.

The Unison members support SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) children at Lift Pioneer School, and Columbus School and College. They want a pay increase to reflect their roles dealing with children with varied and complex needs, similar to the SEND teachers who deservedly received a pay uplift of £5,500.

A protest took place Monday at Lift's London offices. The workers held a previous stoppage in January.

UK microbiology workers at Yorkshire hospital walk out over pay banding

Microbiology staff at the Airedale NHS Foundation Trust in Yorkshire, England took further strike action February 9-11. A stoppage is also planned for February 18-20.

The Unite members walked out previously before Christmas, demanding to be on a higher pay band, commensurate with the work they do. They work for Integrated Pathology Solutions, which provides diagnostic services for hospitals in Yorkshire.

Merseyside council workers at Wirral day care centres, England in two-week stoppage over pay grades

UK workers at council-run day centres on the Wirral walked out for two weeks from February 2 over pay grading. The Unison members support disabled and vulnerable adults at the centres and demand pay according to their skills and responsibilities.

Jade Textile Egypt workers strike for higher wages

On Sunday, workers at the Jade Textile Egypt factory in 10th of Ramadan City came out on strike for higher wages. The sportswear company supplies brands like Nike, Tommy Hilfiger and Lacoste.

They are calling for monthly wages to be raised to 10,000 Egyptian pounds (\$210), and rejected an inadequate offer from the company. Jade Textile Egypt, owned by Turkey's Ye?im Group, had approved only an average annual increase of about 800 pounds, with base wages remaining below 6,500 pounds.

The dispute has spread from the 10th Ramadan City factory, the company's largest plant, to factories in Borg El Arab and Ismailia, where workers face similar conditions.

One worker told press they had "asked for less than our rights." She called for "even half the wages" given to the company's workers in Turkey, which last year raised its minimum wage to \$655. Many Turkish factories have shifted production to Egypt to exploit cheaper labour.

There are around 6,000 workers at the 10th of Ramadan City site, about a third of them women. Defying threats that they would be dismissed or reported to the National Security Agency, they held a large protest in the company's yard Sunday. Similar attempts have been reported from Ismailia. There were reports that management attempted to get them to sign statements opposing the strike, but workers tore these up.

On Monday, the company halted bus services to the factory in an effort to halt the protest. Workers travelled by taxi at their own expense. They were met by police and security forces, who tried unsuccessfully to prevent them entering the factory. The workers chanted "Open the gates, we're not leaving."

Once inside, they continued to chant demands for higher wages and the removal of the Human Resources Director.

"National Day of Disruption" at crime against Arab communities in Israel

Following demonstrations last month, the Jewish-Arab Standing Together movement held another "National Day of Disruption" across the south of Israel Tuesday. Starting in Jaffa, protests disrupted traffic from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, culminating in a rally in Haifa. There were also walkouts from workplaces.

The protests, organised by Standing Together with the families of murder victims, are protesting an epidemic of organised crime against Palestinian communities that has gone unchecked by Israeli authorities.

Protesters blocked southbound lanes of Tel Aviv's main traffic artery, the Ayalon Highway, for about half an hour. In a separate protest nearby, a woman was arrested for allegedly pouring red paint into a public fountain. This form of protest was also reported in Haifa, while roads were blocked in Jerusalem.

Jamal Zahalka, chairman of municipal umbrella organisation The Higher Arab Monitoring Committee, said that “Arab citizens suffer from a total lack of security.” Zahalka appealed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to dismiss the openly racist National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, whom protesters accuse of treating Arab lives as expendable.

Last year, the worst on record, 252 Palestinians were killed by gangs. This year, 38 people have already been killed in incidents related to criminal violence and gangs.

Water workers in Johannesburg, South Africa begin unprotected strike over unpaid bonuses

Workers employed by Johannesburg Water in South Africa walked out on unprotected strike from February. The South Africa Municipal Workers’ Union members demand payment in full of performance bonuses due in December.

The authorities bemoan the fact that the strike comes during an ongoing water supply crisis. Press report that they blame this on “high water consumption in Gauteng, particularly the City of Johannesburg and Tshwane,” rather than lack of investment in infrastructure.

Residents complain of frequent water outages, and days without a water supply. Burst pipes plus a leaking reservoir means water supply is intermittent for basic household needs like cooking, washing and flushing toilets.

Aviation workers launch strike against privatisation in Enugu State, Nigeria

Flights to and from the Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu, Nigeria were brought to a standstill February 6, after aviation workers walked out to protest the Federal Government’s plan to turn the airport into a private concession.

Workers are angry how the concession process was pushed through. They fear their jobs will be under threat under the new private operators.

Workers shut down flights after hearing news that the airport was to be put into the hands of a South-East governor and a wealthy businessman from Anambra State.

A local commentator said, “All we know is that they said full concessioning will come into effect in two years’ time, but nothing was said about the future of the workers when the new owners take over.”

Unions sell out Nigerian health workers’ indefinite stoppage

The Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) have instructed Nigerian health workers to end their national strike after 84 days of action without any resolution of their grievances.

The workers walked out on November 15. JOHESU represents 85 percent of the health sector other than doctors and nurses, including dietitians, physiotherapists, optometrists, radiographer, medical laboratory scientists, medical social workers, clinical psychologists and dental therapists.

Workers want retention allowances and staff transport, as is provided for doctors and nurses, as well as pay demands. Earlier this year, the unions

narrowed their demands down to implementation of the Consolidated Health Salary Structure, the official pay scale for health professionals other than doctors, but even this was ditched when the strike was “suspended.”

Unions call off strike by university staff in Ghana

Striking university staff in Ghana have been ordered to return to work by government arbiter the National Labour Commission pending resumption of talks.

The strike over attacks on pay and conditions begun on Tuesday was then called off by the unions—the Senior Staff Association-Universities of Ghana, the Teachers and Educational Workers’ Union of the Trades Union Congress, the Federation of Universities Senior Staff Association of Ghana, and the Technical Universities Administrators Association of Ghana.



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