

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 teachers in Catalonia, Spain, in week-long strike for better pay and conditions

Tens of thousands of teachers in Catalonia, Spain, launched strikes and demonstrations March 16–20, protesting an agreement over pay and conditions negotiated between the regional government and two major unions.

On the last day, 35,000 joined a mass demonstration in Barcelona, blocking major roads. Thousands protested in other cities throughout the week in support of demands for higher wages amid rising living costs, reduced workloads and increased staff.

Around 95 percent of the teachers had already rejected the agreement negotiated by the Comisiones Obreras and Unión General de Trabajadores unions, declaring it inadequate and negotiated without meaningful consultation. The USTEC, CGT, Intersindical and other unions involved were then forced into organising the strike to renew negotiations.

Civil servants, nurses and teachers in Portugal strike against austerity-driven pay stagnation and deteriorating work conditions

Civil servants across Portugal, including workers in education, health and essential government services, held a 24-hour strike Monday, causing school closures, delayed appointments and late benefit payments.

The workers are members of the National Federation of Independent Unions of Public Administration and Public Entities, which represents 9,000 public-sector workers. They are demanding greater staffing in the health service, a statutory career path and progression for educational support technicians, and an end to an unfair quota-based performance appraisal system.

Nurses organised by the Portuguese Nurses Union held a strike March 19, and members of the National Federation of Teachers in early years, primary and secondary education are set to strike Thursday. The strikes are a response to conditions across Portugal—stagnant real wages, precarious employment, soaring housing costs, and austerity-driven public service decline.

Greek rail workers strike on day of Tempi rail crash trial

On Monday, a 24-hour nationwide train stoppage took place in Greece, shutting down all rail services. The stoppage, a protest and remembrance of the 2023 Tempi rail crash, was held on the opening day of the trial over the disaster.

After a chaotic first session, in a room so cramped that there were calls for fire hazard inspections, the trial was adjourned for a week.

Panhellenic Federation of Rail Employees union members demand that those culpable be held accountable, though no political figures are among the defendants.

The horrific deaths of 57 mainly young people, including 11 rail workers, following the collision between a freight and passenger train were a crime of capitalism, resulting from an unsafe train network caused by years of cuts by successive governments and its privatisation under the Syriza government in 2017.

Hundreds of casually employed Wolt couriers in Cyprus strike for a living wage

An estimated 500 couriers for delivery platform Wolt in Cyprus began an indefinite work stoppage over pay and conditions March 20. Around 100 couriers demonstrated outside the company offices in Nicosia on Monday.

The drivers, mainly young immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, complain of low pay per delivery. Wolt takes 33 percent of their wages, while third-party companies which employ 80 percent of them also take their own commission. The couriers have to work long hours to make ends meet.

In Finland, a Supreme Administrative Court decision ruled that couriers working for Wolt are assumed to be employees and should be treated as such. According to the union PAM representing Wolt couriers, disguising an employment relationship as “entrepreneurship” weakens terms and conditions of employment, lowers pay and is used simply to reduce labour costs.

More than 2.1 billion of the world’s 3.6 billion workers—around 60 percent—labour in the informal economy. They work on a casual basis for low pay, often in hazardous conditions and without legal rights, job security or social protection, including sick pay, medical or disability insurance, unemployment benefits or pensions.

Bus drivers in Doncaster, UK, set to walk out over pay parity

Bus drivers working for First Bus in Doncaster, England, are set to walk out on Saturday and again Monday. They are based at the city’s depot in

Leger Way.

The Unite union members are demanding a pay increase to give them pay parity with drivers working for First Bus in nearby Sheffield. As First Bus is one of the main bus operators in Doncaster, the stoppage is expected to severely impact the city's bus transport network.

First Bus had revenues of over £830 million for the six months to September. Further stoppages are planned for April 7, 22 and 24.

School support staff in UK's East Midlands stop work over threat of job and pay cuts

School support staff working as teaching assistants, administrators and chaplaincy workers at schools in the English East Midlands area of Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire walked out Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Unison union members are employed at eight schools run by Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic multi-academy trust (MAT) and 14 schools run by the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic MAT. Both MATs are proposing to make redundancies and cut the pay of some workers by around 20 percent. They are attempting to overcome funding shortfalls.

Unison members at Our Lady of Lourdes voted by 98 percent and those at St Ralph Sherwin voted by 94 percent for the action.

In a separate dispute, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support staff at Brick Lane School in Tower Hamlets, London, were on strike Tuesday through Thursday. The National Education Union (NEU) members are seeking increased pay, improved sick pay terms and union recognition.

UK teachers at school in Hexham strike over impact of erosion of state education on pupil behaviour

Teachers at Haydon Bridge High School in Hexham, England, began a three-day stoppage Tuesday.

The NASUWT members are protesting school management's failure to implement an effective pupil behaviour management system. NASUWT says it has been urging the school leadership to address the problem for the last 18 months. NASUWT members previously walked out in December over the same issue. Further stoppages are planned for March 31, April 1, 2, 21–23 and 28–30.

Similar strikes have occurred elsewhere, bound up with staff shortages and funding cuts. The NASUWT and NEU have blocked unified action by school staff over pay, conditions and funding, which negatively impacts staff and student wellbeing.

Nurses in Kilifi County, Kenya walk out on indefinite strike over pay and working conditions

Nurses in Kenya's Kilifi County launched an indefinite strike on March 13. This followed the end of a 21-day notice period, after county authorities failed to address longstanding grievances over pay, working conditions and contractual insecurity. The walkout has severely disrupted services across public hospitals and health centres, exposing the fragile state of healthcare provision in the region.

The Kenya National Union of Nurses and Midwives members say they will not return to work until their demands, including permanent employment for contract workers, payment of owed wages and full implementation of prior agreements, are met.

Union officials criticised the county government for refusing to honour a 2021 agreement that pledged to improve wages and conditions. They highlight the failure to implement nationally approved salary increases, which were adopted in other counties but not in Kilifi.

Nurses report working long hours under increasingly untenable conditions, with many employed on insecure locum contracts, often exceeding 10-hour shifts without overtime compensation. The union leaders accused authorities of deliberately delaying negotiations, only initiating talks after the strike deadline had passed and offering no concrete concessions.

The county administration issued appeals for a return to work while threatening disciplinary measures against striking workers. Meanwhile, residents dependent on public healthcare face mounting difficulties accessing essential treatment.

The strike highlights Kenya's underfunded and deteriorating health system, where chronic understaffing, casualisation and the authorities' refusal to honour agreements have created explosive conditions.

Nurses launch strike action at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals in Zimbabwe

Nurses at Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, walked out on strike over wages and allowances on March 20. Operations at the country's largest referral hospital were brought to a near standstill, with student nurses and a skeleton staff attempting to maintain critical services.

This follows a wave of protests across Zimbabwe's public health sector and reflects mounting anger among healthcare workers over collapsing living standards and deteriorating working conditions.

The nurses demand an urgent salary increment and improved travel and housing allowances. They denounce their current pay—reported to be around US\$450 per month—as “peanuts,” saying it is wholly inadequate amid spiralling inflation and rising fuel costs.

Workers receive a monthly travel allowance of around US\$15, while daily round-trip travel to work now costs up to \$12 following recent price hikes by the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority. The nurses say the Public Service Commission bus service does not accommodate their shift patterns.

They are also calling for increased housing support to cope with rising rental costs, and access to free medical care at public hospitals. Nurses say they cannot afford treatment themselves. They point to the degrading state of uniforms and basic resources as evidence of systemic neglect.

Government officials urged nurses to channel their grievances through formal mechanisms but offered no concrete solution.

The Parirenyatwa strike follows a protest on March 21 at Sally Mugabe Central Hospital in Harare against worsening conditions, low wages, and the collapse of the public health system. Nurses refused to perform their normal duties and staged demonstrations within hospital grounds. Statements from staff members point to chronic understaffing, a lack of essential equipment, and the inability to provide adequate patient care under current conditions.

Nurses in Midlands province issued the authorities a 48-hour ultimatum on March 23 over similar problems.

Dental students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa strike to demand proper training

Dental students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa, walked out on Monday and handed a memorandum of demands to management, including a meeting with the South African Dental Technicians Council.

The students say that since May 2025, they have had no dental laboratory facilities, and teaching has been online. They are demanding proper hands-on training, accreditation and funding. They are determined to boycott lessons until their demands are met.

Workers at transport office in Randburg, South Africa strike over pay

Workers at the Transport Education Training Authority (Teta) offices in Randburg Municipality, South Africa, walked out on indefinite strike Monday over pay.

The Authority Education National Health and Allied Workers Union members are demanding two bonus payments outstanding from 2023. The union revised down their original pay demand from 13 percent to nine percent.

Teta imposed a 5.5 percent rise on staff and 3 percent for management. Workers are struggling to send their children to school, afford transport and buy food.

Rail workers in Accra, Ghana, protest as union tries to keep a lid on anger after years of broken promises

Railway workers in Ghana have mounted a series of protests in Accra against the persistent non-payment of wages, exposing the deepening crisis within the state-owned Ghana Railway Company Limited.

On March 19, workers marched to the Ministry of Transport to demand payment of salary arrears stretching back 13–15 months. They said this was not an isolated grievance but the culmination of prolonged neglect and broken government commitments.

The dispute highlights a wider deterioration of conditions across the sector, with workers citing ongoing delays in pay, worsening infrastructure, and insufficient investment. Earlier actions, including an indefinite strike in 2025 over months of unpaid wages, disrupted rail services.

Government officials have issued pro forma assurances on the eve of industrial action that have failed to resolve the underlying crisis. Workers, many of whom have gone more than a year without any income, face severe social consequences, including debt, family hardship and declining living standards.



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