

# 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.

## Postal workers across Belgium in wildcat strikes against deteriorating working conditions

A March 27 walkout by postal delivery staff at Mouscron sorting office in the Wallonia region of Belgium spread to delivery offices throughout the country by Wednesday, with 40 distribution centres also affected.

The spontaneous strikes were in protest over plans to change working hours, imposing later start and finish times in order to compete with other 24-hour parcel couriers like Amazon. The restructure also demands that workers are more flexible around shift patterns and work location.

The unions involved demand suspension of the changes and the opening of negotiations but are not fundamentally opposed to the restructuring and were not involved in the walkouts.

## Thousands of French teachers strike against government cuts in education

Thousands of teachers in France took part in a nationwide strike Wednesday, demonstrating in Paris, Lyon, Marseilles and many other cities against job cuts and low pay.

The teachers, organised by a coalition of six unions, marched to the Ministry of Education in Paris to protest the axing of 4,019 teaching posts planned in the budget for 2026. They say it will increase class sizes and stress loads.

## Thousands join general strike in Northern Cyprus, riot police used against demonstrators

Workers in Turkish-governed Northern Cyprus held a one-day general strike Monday, with thousands marching to the legislature building in Nicosia to protest proposed cuts to cost-of-living payments. The demonstrators were met by riot police and conflict ensued when fire hoses were used to disperse them.

Public employees and retirees currently receive an allowance to offset inflation of the Turkish lira, but planned new legislation will limit this to one final payment until next year.

## Gas distribution network workers in Stockport, UK to walk out over excessive overtime working

Workers employed by Cadent Gas supplying natural gas supplies in Stockport, England are set to walk out for three days beginning Saturday. The workers repair and maintain the gas network infrastructure.

The GMB members are protesting the current weekend working rotas which means they work more than half of weekends in the year. Further stoppages are planned for April 10, 17 and 24.

## Lecturers in Glasgow, Scotland walk out over health and safety concerns

Eight lecturers at City of Glasgow College Riverside campus, Scotland were on strike from Monday to Thursday this week.

The Educational Institute of Scotland–Further Education Lecturers' Association (IES-FELA) members, who teach welding and fabrication, have raised health and safety concerns over welding procedures at the college. They have taken previous strike action and last week held a protest outside a meeting of the college board.

Press report that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advised the college's chief executive, Paul Little, on December 18 that contraventions had been established.

The HSE found lecturers had not been properly trained in how to use the local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems, meaning they could be exposed to welding fumes which carry health risks such as lung cancer.

It was discovered that lecturers had been demonstrating welding on a workbench in the middle of the workshop, without the use of LEV, rather than in the welding booths. HES told Little that "You have therefore failed to provide employees with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training."

While this breach was resolved, the EIS-FELA raised other concerns. Competent risk assessments had not been completed, basic workshop safety training had not been provided, RPE masks had not been provided and there was no indication of forthcoming health surveillance for staff exposed to fumes and dust.

## Administrative staff at British Medical Association to hold further stoppages over pay

Hundreds of administrative staff working at the UK doctors' union the British Medical Association (BMA) walked out on Friday and Saturday of

last week. A further two-day stoppage is planned to begin April 6. This stoppage will coincide with the first two days of a six-day stoppage over pay by resident doctors belonging to the BMA.

The GMB union members are protesting years of below-inflation pay rises which mean their pay has been eroded by 17 percent. They rejected the latest BMA offer of 2.75 percent. The vote was by 96 percent for action.

### **Mental health support workers in Manchester, UK begin two-week stoppage over pay**

Driver porters working for the Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMHT) began a two-week stoppage over pay on Monday. The staff based at Prestwich hospital deliver samples, medication, food and other supplies to GMMHT facilities across Greater Manchester.

The Unison union members previously took strike action at the end of January and beginning of February. They are demanding to be paid at NHS Agenda for Change Band 3, rather than the current lower Band 2. They have been in dispute for the last three years. Following a GMMHT internal review the trust did agree to pay the support workers on Band 3 with back pay, but then reneged on the agreement.

### **Health workers in Mozambique threaten all-out strike after months of partial strikes over collapsing healthcare system**

Health workers in Mozambique have held a partial strike since January 16. They are now threatening to escalate their ongoing dispute into a nationwide strike, amid mounting anger over the government's failure to honour previously signed agreements.

The dispute centres on long-standing grievances including unpaid overtime, poor working conditions and chronic underfunding of the public health system.

Healthcare workers have repeatedly engaged in strikes and protests to press their demands. Agreements reached in earlier negotiations have remained largely unfulfilled, fuelling widespread distrust toward the government. At the same time, hospitals face severe shortages of resources and staff, placing immense strain on workers and undermining patient care.

The trade unions are seeking to channel growing militancy into renewed negotiations, even as rank-and-file frustration intensifies over repeated betrayals. The struggle is part of a broader wave of unrest across Mozambique's public sector.

### **Nurses in Zimbabwe to hold three-day strike over pay, conditions and lack of healthcare funding**

Nurses across Zimbabwe are set to hold strike action April 15-17. They are demanding wage increases, improved allowances and access to basic medical care, amid a deepening social crisis driven by soaring living costs.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) claims to back the planned walkout, pointing to declining real wages amid reports that some nurses received reduced pay in recent months. The struggle reflects the

broader assault on public sector workers, whose incomes have been eroded by inflation while essential services continue to deteriorate.

In addition to wage demands, nurses are protesting against inadequate housing and transport provisions, noting that state-run transport systems fail to accommodate their working schedules. They are also demanding free access to healthcare within the public system, underscoring the reality that those tasked with caring for the population cannot themselves afford treatment.

Chronic shortages of medical supplies and equipment have further intensified the crisis, leaving healthcare workers unable to carry out their duties and exposing patients to worsening conditions.

### **Union obeys court order to end stoppage by Ghanaian education workers**

The Public Services Workers' Union (PSWU) ended a strike at the Ghana Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Service, begun March 24, the next day.

Workers walked out without following usual labour procedures and outside of ongoing negotiations. State authorities including the National Labour Commission intervened, ruling the action unlawful and ordering an immediate return to work. PSWU leaders complied.

Grievances have been building in the TVET sector over conditions of service and workplace issues. Management dismissed many of the concerns raised during negotiations as "individualised," exposing a broader pattern in which workers' demands are fragmented.

The TVET workers' demands, including over conditions of employment and representation, remain unresolved.

ZCTU officials seek to channel the growing anger of health workers into appeals directed at the government.

### **Municipal workers protest outside Gauteng High Court, South Africa against Democratic Alliance attack on pay agreement**

Scores of workers protested March 27 outside Gauteng High Court, South Africa against the Democratic Alliance's (DA) application to block the implementation of a pay agreement.

The right-wing DA, South Africa's second-largest party, is seeking an interdict to stop the City of Johannesburg from proceeding with a deal they argue could push the municipality into a financial and service delivery crisis.

The agreement, valued at R10 billion, was concluded between the city and municipal workers and is aimed at addressing salary disparities, as workers are not graded correctly or paid at the level of their grading.

The South African Municipal Workers' Union members say the outcome of the case will directly impact their livelihoods. Athi Fihlani, a municipal employee from Ekurhuleni, said, "If they fail to release this money, we will continue to suffer. Some of us are struggling to make ends meet due to the high cost of living. We do not even have proper houses. As government employees who earn too little to afford proper housing, we find it difficult, as we are told that we earn too much to be afforded low-cost housing by the government."

### **Former Extended Public Works Programme workers in South Africa**

## protest for jobs and unpaid benefits

About 200 former municipal workers marched from Golden Walk to the Germiston mayor's office March 25, demanding jobs and long-promised compensation from the City of Ekurhuleni, South Africa.

The demonstrators were prevented from approaching the venue by metro police. The workers are among roughly 3,600 participants in the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) who were employed between 2013 and 2015 to clean parks under the Lungile Mtshali project.

More than a decade later, many remain unemployed while their names still appear on municipal payroll databases, effectively blocking them from accessing the Social Relief of Distress grant and other state employment opportunities.

According to worker representatives, the database incorrectly lists them as earning salaries as so-called "ghost workers," in some cases as high as R17,000 a month. Many of the former workers now survive on minimal social grants or informal work.

The dispute has dragged on for years through legal channels pursued by organisations including the Simunye Workers Forum and the Casual Workers Office. While a Labour Court of South Africa ruling in 2020 awarded compensation to 197 applicants, many workers say they have still not received payment.

The protest formed part of a broader mobilisation organised by the South African Federation of Trade Unions against job losses, with parallel demonstrations reported in Marikana and communities around the Maleoskop Blueridge Platinum Mine.

The EWP was set up by the ANC government in 2004, supposedly as a way into work but in reality as a cheap labour scheme. Unemployment in South Africa was 31.4 percent in the last quarter of 2025, with youth unemployment rising to 43.8 percent.



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