

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

23 April 2026

The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Europe

Thousands of national postal workers in Wallonia, Belgium continue strike against cost-cutting job reforms

Postal workers employed by partially privatised Belgian national carrier Bpost are continuing the indefinite strike in Brussels and the Wallonia region that began with a wildcat walkout at the end of March.

The CGSP Postal Sector, CSC-Transcom and VSOA Post unions reached an agreement with company management on April 17, but workers refused to stand down until they were consulted about the proposed settlement. Distribution centres are still blockaded, with packages piling up in hundreds of thousands at warehouses rented by Bpost.

The strikes are in protest over plans to change working hours with later start and finish times, in order to compete with other 24-hour parcel couriers like Amazon. Management also expect flexibility from workers around shift patterns and work locations.

Almost half of the previously state-owned Bpost is now in the hands of private investors.

Thousands of hospitality workers in Norway strike for better pay and conditions

An estimated 1,600-2,000 hotel and restaurant workers in Norway began an indefinite stoppage Sunday, after collective pay and benefit negotiations with the employers' body, the Norwegian Hospitality Association, broke down.

The Fellesforbundet union members demand higher wages, advance payment of sick pay to offset the increased cost of living, and improved working conditions.

Tourism and hospitality workers worldwide endure seasonal contracts, irregular hours, unpaid overtime and intensified workloads.

Tens of thousands march in Lisbon, Portugal against proposed changes in labour laws

On April 17, tens of thousands of workers stopped work and

demonstrated in the Portuguese capital of Lisbon, protesting against government attacks on workers' rights and conditions.

The demonstration was called by the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers and the Common Front union platform. The attitude of the unions was revealed in a comment to news site *Expresso* by the president of the Federation of Public Administration Unions that, "We want to exhaust the negotiation route." He added that the union had not issued strike notices in support of the protest.

The workers oppose the proposed reforms of working conditions, implemented as part of capitalist recovery plans along with austerity driven cuts in public service spending, as this will mean increased exploitation, redundancies, job insecurity and casualised employment.

Air traffic controllers in Spain stop work over staffing levels and poor working conditions

Air traffic controllers at nine regional and island airports in Spain began an indefinite strike April 17, causing delays and cancellations. The 109 workers are employed by Saerco, a privately owned air navigation company subcontracted by AENA, the world's largest airport manager.

The Union of Air Traffic Controllers and Workers' Commissions union members are protesting staff shortages, work overloads and irregular organisational practices.

They say shift changes and approved leave are changed at short notice and mandatory breaks are not always given, creating conditions of fatigue, stress and permanent uncertainty which puts passenger safety at risk.

London Underground train drivers strike over threat of imposed four-day working rota

Around 1,800 train drivers on the London Underground subway system (the Tube) held a 24-hour stoppage Tuesday beginning midday, followed by a further 24-hour stoppage on Thursday.

The Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT) members are opposing threats by Transport for London, which runs the Tube, to impose a compressed four-day working pattern which would increase the working day to 8.75 hours. Workers fear this would lead to fatigue and pose health and safety issues.

The effect of stoppage between Tuesday and Wednesday led to disruption across the network with no service on the Piccadilly, Circle and Waterloo & City lines. A complete closure did not take place as around only half of the drivers are RMT members. The other main drivers' union, Aslef has accepted four-day working.

Further 24-hour stoppages are planned for May 19 and 21 and June 16 and 18. The RMT suspended proposed stoppages in March over the same issue.

Support staff at Cambridge University, England strike over pay

Around 500 support staff employed by Cambridge University walked out Tuesday and Wednesday. Their roles include working in the university library, museum, estate management, student services, finance and in IT.

The Unite union members are protesting falling real wages. Cambridge University imposed a below-inflation pay rise of 1.4 percent for the year 2025/26. They are calling for a “Cambridge weighting” to reflect the higher cost of living in the Cambridge area. This would follow one introduced at Oxford University, where in 2024 a pensionable weighting of £1,500 was introduced, increased to £1,730 last year.

A further two-day stoppage is planned for April 30.

Teachers at London school walk out over workload and to protest unfair practices

Teachers at the Connaught School for Girls in east London walked out on Tuesday. They are scheduled to remain out until May 8.

The National Education Union (NEU) members voted by a 95 percent majority to walk out over excessive workloads and unfair management practices. They are also currently balloting for industrial action against proposed management restructuring plans, which they say would target NEU activists.

Teachers at Weymouth school, England walk out

Teachers at Budmouth Academy in Weymouth, Dorset walked out Wednesday and Thursday. The secondary school is Weymouth’s largest secondary school.

Around 29 teachers who are members of NASUWT are taking strike action for the first time at the school. They are opposing management bullying and heavy workloads with an average teacher working 50 hours a week. Stoppages are also planned for April 28 and 29. Stoppages are also planned for April 28-29.

Further stoppages by UK mental health support workers in Manchester over pay

Driver porters working for the Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMHT) began a three-week stoppage on Tuesday in a long running dispute centred on underpayment for the role they provide. The National Health Service (NHS) staff – around 11 driver porters – are based at Prestwich hospital and play a critical role delivering samples, medication and other supplies to GMMHT facilities across Greater Manchester

The Unison members have already held two stoppages over the same issue since the beginning of the year. They are demanding to be paid at

National Health Service 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 reneged on the agreement.

Middle East

Workers’ protests resume in Iran under shadow of renewed US war threat

Protests by Iranian workers have begun again as the country suffers the devastating results of previous US bombing and faces the threat of its resumption.

Saturday saw protests by workers at the Ilam Gas Refinery. They gathered in front of the Labour Office in Ilam, then marched to the governor’s office. Their demands included the immediate reinstatement of 150 workers laid off in October and the payment of wage arrears.

Sunday saw protests by Social Security retirees in the city of Shush. They were protesting the ongoing deterioration of their living standards exacerbated by inflation and the impact of US and Israeli attacks.

That day also saw protests by “Green Record” teachers. Originally employed on a temporary basis, they are demanding to be given formal employment status by the Ministry of Education.

After decades of sanctions, the US is now blockading all ships into and out of Iran, threatening to strangle its economy if it does not capitulate.

Israeli software company workers protest outside CEO’s home over company plans to change working agreements

Workers employed by Israeli software company SAP held a protest April 17 outside the home of SAP CEO Orna Kleinman. They are protesting the company’s plans to unilaterally cancel collective agreements.

They were supported by representatives from workers’ committees from companies including Cellcom, ECI and Pelephone. Two weeks ago, the trade union federation Histadrut declared an official dispute at SAP, giving the go-ahead for industrial action.

Israeli shipping company workers strike over redundancy threat as company is taken over

Around 900 workers employed by Zim Integrated Shipping Services Ltd came out on strike April 16. The workers are protesting the takeover of the Israeli state-owned Zim, which will lead to hundreds of compulsory redundancies. Zim is being taken over by a foreign consortium comprising the German Hapag Lloyd shipping line as well Saudi and Qatari interests.

Africa

Pay strike by medical interns continues in Mozambique

Medical interns in Mozambique are continuing their stoppage begun on

April 13. They warn that they will only return to work if the government honours long-outstanding financial commitments to them.

The strike, which has disrupted services in public hospitals, centres on unpaid subsidies and allowances that interns say are essential for their survival amid rising living costs.

The dispute highlights the deepening crisis in Mozambique's public health system, with long-term chronic underfunding, staff shortages and poor working conditions. Interns report that the failure to pay agreed benefits is undermining their ability to continue working.

Union representatives and health authorities have sought to contain the dispute through negotiations, with promises that payments will be made in the near future.

Over 3,500 Kenyan health workers set to hold all-out strike at the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital

More than 3,500 health workers at the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya issued a seven-day strike ultimatum on April 14. They warn of a total shutdown of services over the non-remittance of billions of Kenyan shillings in statutory deductions.

The dispute centres on more than Sh3 billion in unpaid pension contributions, loan repayments and other deductions, which workers say have accumulated over months. The ultimatum follows repeated fruitless negotiations between hospital management and health unions.

Severe underfunding, staffing shortages and a lack of essential supplies have created intolerable working conditions. Workers report being forced to pay for their own medical care due to the absence of insurance, while patients face declining standards of treatment as services are scaled down or withdrawn entirely due to significant budget cuts.

Nurses in Zimbabwe launch strike at several hospitals

Nurses in Zimbabwe walked out on April 20, severely disrupting services at key facilities including Sally Mugabe and Parirenyatwa hospitals, already strained by staffing shortages and lack of resources.

The Zimbabwe Nurses Association (ZNA) members cite declining real incomes and worsening conditions as the reason for their action. Demonstrations and work stoppages spread nationally, with police deployed in some areas to disperse protesting workers.

The government, led by Emmerson Mnangagwa, responded by urging nurses to return to work and promising to address their grievances through negotiations with the ZNA.

The strike follows a prolonged dispute over salaries, with nurses rejecting what they called a derisory pay increase of around US\$30, far below their demand for wages closer to US\$600 per month.

Nigerian teachers strike over pay arrears and poor conditions

Teachers across Nigeria have engaged in strike action in multiple states over unpaid salaries, deteriorating working conditions and the chronic underfunding of public education.

Teachers in Abuja walked out on April 20. This is the latest of a series of disputes in which educators have walked out of classrooms after

months of delayed wages and broken agreements by state governments. The stoppages have disrupted schooling for thousands of students.

The strikes are driven by longstanding grievances, including non-implementation of agreed salary structures, unpaid arrears, promotion and welfare issues, and failure to invest in school infrastructure. Many teachers report working in overcrowded classrooms with inadequate materials, while suffering irregular pay that makes it difficult for them to survive and pay bills.

State authorities repeatedly respond with promises of dialogue and partial measures—used for calling off strikes by the unions—without resolving the issues. Agreements when signed, are ignored.

Workers in Marikana, South Africa protest outside mining company demanding jobs

More than 100 residents from Marikana, South Africa protested April 15 outside Samancor Chrome's Sandton headquarters, demanding jobs in one of South Africa's key mining regions.

Organised by the South African Federation of Trade Unions under its Jobs Bloodbath Campaign, the demonstration expressed the social crisis produced by mass unemployment, poverty and hunger in Rustenburg's mining communities. The company, with an estimated annual revenue of \$75 million, extracts enormous profits while leaving local people without jobs, training or economic opportunities.

The memorandum delivered to Samancor Chrome Wednesday demanded 5,000 jobs for community members, 1,000 training opportunities, lower barriers to employment, and greater inclusion of women. It also called for more humane hiring practices, including consideration of rehabilitation for those with criminal records and a reduction in the minimum education requirement for general workers to Grade 5.

When the City of Cape Town hosted a jobs fair on April 16 promising 1,000 call centre jobs, 25,000 young people desperate for employment turned up.

Community health workers march through Cape Town, South Africa demanding permanent contracts

Community health workers in the Western Cape, South Africa marched on the provincial legislature in Cape Town April 16, demanding permanent employment.

The National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers members denounced the government's outsourcing regime, under which thousands remain trapped as casualised labour, some for as long as two decades. They are demanding pensions, medical aid and secure employment.

Workers described being compelled to subsidise the collapse of social services out of their own meagre incomes, buying food, electricity and basic necessities for patients abandoned by the state. These conditions reflect the broader assault on public health and the subordination of social needs to austerity, with workers forced to shoulder the burden of a crisis created by government neglect and capitalist cost-cutting.

Protest march in Johannesburg, South Africa in defence of immigrants

On Saturday, more than 150 protesters marched in Johannesburg, South Africa in a demonstration against xenophobia, denouncing the campaign to scapegoat immigrants for the deepening social crisis produced by unemployment and collapsing public services.

Organised by Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia and immigrant-led organisations, the protest exposed attempts by the state to divert mounting anger over poverty and inequality onto migrant workers from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Nigeria while shielding the real architects of the crisis in the politics of the African National Congress-led Government of National Unity.

Speakers at the protest pointed to the brutal conditions confronting immigrants, including police harassment, extortion, denial of healthcare and education, and super-exploitation by employers, who use undocumented workers as a source of cheap labour. Migrant workers described being underpaid, overworked and denied basic rights, while many remain trapped in bureaucratic limbo without documentation.

Protesters raised the necessity for a unified struggle of the working class across borders.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact