

# 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 in Madrid, Spain demonstrate against housing shortages, high rents and property speculation**

An estimated 100,000 people marched in Madrid, Spain on Sunday to protest the city's housing crisis. Demonstrators rallied under the banner, "Housing is costing us our lives," denouncing soaring rents, speculation and the lack of affordable housing.

The march, organised by the Madrid Tenants' Union, is part of a wave of protests planned across more than 30 Spanish cities in the coming weeks as housing and living costs for workers continue to rise.

The protestors accuse property owners and developers of driving working residents from their neighbourhoods and deepening social inequality. They demand rent controls, expanded social housing and measures against tourist accommodation and speculation.

Spokesperson for the Tenants' Union, Alicia Del Río, called for "civil disobedience" and for trade unions to launch a general strike.

## **Hundreds of miners at Öz?en Mining in Edirne, Turkey strike and march over unpaid wages and sackings**

Over 350 mineworkers at the Öz?en Mining company in Uzunköprü, near Edirne, Turkey began an indefinite strike May 20 and held demonstrations to demand fair treatment and wages from the employer, Kiremitçiler Group.

The rank-and-file Ba??ms?z Maden-?? union members say they have not received overtime pay for over a year or wages for three months. 21 workers have been falsely dismissed on accusations of theft and voluntary retirees have not received redundancy pay or benefits.

The miners intend to hold more protests at the Kiremitçiler factory and march to the owner's house in Tekirda?, 90 km away. They say they will petition the government in the capital, Ankara if their demands go unanswered.

## **Hundreds of doctors in Abruzzo, southern Italy demonstrate against cuts in health budget**

Hundreds of doctors from the Abruzzo region of Italy stopped work

Tuesday, and demonstrated outside the health department in its largest regional city, Pescara. They are protesting against the national government's health reforms and the failure to renew an agreement on local healthcare finance.

The Italian Federation of General Practitioners, the National Autonomous Union of Italian Doctors' members and the medical sections of the major national trade union confederations demand greater investment, and say that general practice in the Abruzzo region has reached breaking point. One protest banner stated: "We want to treat our patients, not your financial crises."

## **Icelandic sailors on three vessels on indefinite strike against low wages and vulnerable employment**

On Monday, foremen and able seamen on three container ships owned by the Icelandic company Eimskip began an indefinite strike to support their demand for a wage increase and cost-of-living payment, in jeopardy since contracts expired at the end of 2025.

The Seafarers Union of Iceland members are also concerned about job security, as the three ships are owned by Eimskip but registered through a subsidiary, Faroe Ship, operated under the flag of the Faroe Islands.

According to *The Maritime Executive*, the company required sailors to sign on via the Faroe Islands at lower wages or risk losing work, with Eimskip threatening to use foreign crews at one-fifth the wages of the Icelanders.

## **Further stoppages by drivers at London bus company over rota changes and fatigue**

Around 300 bus drivers employed by the East London Bus and Coach Company (part of Stagecoach) based at the Bow bus depot walked out Wednesday until Friday.

The Unite union members report that rota changes imposed by the company are leading to fatigue issues. Unite say the rota changes "include bus drivers completing multiple hour and a half long journeys without adequate breaks, having just 10 hours of rest times between shifts and Stagecoach refusing to schedule meal relief breaks at the depot, leaving drivers without a suitable area to recover as well as expecting them to refuel vehicles using remote electric charge points, which increases work demands."

The drivers have been taking intermittent strike action over the issue since March. A further stoppage is planned for June 11-14.

Bus routes from the depot run into central London and the Westfield

Stratford City shopping centre.

### **UK ancillary workers at hospital and university in Cambridge demand high cost-of-living pay supplement**

Staff at Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge held a rally Wednesday lunchtime to protest low levels of pay. They work as porters, clinical engineering technicians and genomics scientists.

The Unite union members are calling for a National Health Service (NHS) high-cost area supplement (HCAS) to reflect the high cost of living in Cambridge.

The rally came as around 500 Unite union members at Cambridge University are also on strike until May 29, demanding a pensionable local pay supplement along the lines of £1,730 supplement paid to Oxford University staff.

*BBC Politics East* reported a Cambridge City Foodbank spokesperson saying, “People of modest means really struggle with the very high cost of rent... There is an issue about [people on] low pay being able to look after their families.”

### **Scottish airport workers set to walk out over pay**

Around 700 airport workers at Edinburgh and Glasgow airports in Scotland are set to strike. Around 370 are employed by Edinburgh Airport Limited and around 320 by airport security firm ICTS and Menzies Aviation at Glasgow airport.

The Unite union members at both airports rejected unacceptable pay offers and voted to walk out. Unite has yet to announce strike dates.

Around 70 Unite members employed by ICTS at Aberdeen airport are currently balloting for strike action over pay, with the ballot closing Thursday.

### **Iranian petrochemical workers at Petronad protest sackings as economy collapses under US blockade**

May 17 saw sacked workers from the Petronad petrochemical facility in Mahshahr in Khuzestan province, Iran protesting outside the Governor’s office. It was part of a near three-week series of protests.

They were protesting the sacking of around 200 workers at the facility, which produces petrochemicals for the pharmaceutical and other industries. The 200 dismissed local workers were replaced by cheaper contract labour from outside the area.

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

### **Mineworkers’ stoppage against low pay and dangerous working conditions in Guinea**

Around 3,000 workers at the Baowu Winning Consortium Simandou

(BWCS) iron ore project in Guinea walked out over pay disparities, bringing mining operations at the giant Simandou deposit to a halt.

Workers stopped blasting, loading, hauling and dumping activities at the Chinese-led joint venture on April 28, although rail and port operations continued. The strike is the first major industrial action at the project, one of the world’s largest undeveloped iron ore reserves, which only recently began exports after years of delays.

The workers are demanding implementation of Guinea’s unified 2025 mining wage structure and parity with employees at Simfer, the Rio Tinto-linked consortium operating Simandou’s southern blocks. BWCS workers receive substantially lower wages, despite carrying out similar work under dangerous conditions.

The strike exposes mounting class tensions surrounding the vast mineral wealth of Guinea, where multinational corporations and Chinese state-backed firms compete for control of strategic resources while workers face low pay and harsh conditions.

Simandou is expected to produce up to 120 million metric tons of iron ore annually at full capacity, vital for global steel production and China’s industrial supply chains. The dispute highlights the growing militancy of African workers facing increasing inequality, inflation and exploitation.

### **Ethiopian health workers continue strike over pay and conditions**

Healthcare professionals across Ethiopia continued their nationwide strike over poverty wages and deteriorating working conditions. The stoppage, begun May 12, disrupted health services, with doctors, nurses and other medical staff protesting low pay, delayed salaries, lack of health insurance and chronic shortages of medical supplies.

Amnesty International reports that at least 121 healthcare workers were arrested since the strike began. Many were detained without warrants or access to lawyers and family members.

They include pathologist Dr. Mahlet Guesh, detained after speaking publicly about conditions facing medical workers in Ethiopia. Amnesty condemned the crackdown, accusing authorities of using arbitrary detention and intimidation to silence dissent among healthcare professionals.

Specialist doctors in Ethiopia earn an average of just \$80 a month, while healthcare spending has fallen sharply in recent years.

The strike highlights the deepening social and economic crisis confronting workers in Ethiopia, where inflation, austerity measures and declining public spending have fuelled growing unrest.

Healthcare workers have spent more than five years attempting to negotiate improvements in salaries and conditions without success. The government’s response—combining repression with threats of legal action against striking workers—shows the mounting tensions between the ruling elite and sections of workers driven into struggle over collapsing living standards and deteriorating public services.

### **Kenyan unions suspend transport strike over rising fuel prices**

Transport unions have suspended Kenya’s nationwide matatu (taxi/minibus) strike over soaring fuel prices.

Operators accused President William Ruto’s government of using “divide-and-rule” tactics to break the industrial action, claiming closed-door negotiations in Nairobi and Mombasa marked by bribery, secret meetings and attempts to sideline militant leaders demanding cuts in

diesel prices.

The strike paralysed transport across the country, stranding commuters, disrupting schools and businesses, and triggering protests against the rising cost of living.

Matutu Workers Union and Long Distance Drivers and Conductors Association members are demanding a reduction of KSh46 per litre in diesel prices after sharp fuel hikes pushed operating costs to unbearable levels. Negotiations chaired by government ministers collapsed after operators rejected a proposal for only a KSh8 reduction.

Some union and transport officials alleged that selected leaders were invited to private meetings with senior government figures and pressured to suspend the strike without securing a written agreement.

Union leaders suspended the strike for one week following talks with the government and a temporary reduction in diesel prices. Demonstrations against rising living costs led to clashes with police, with at least four people killed, dozens injured and over 700 arrested. Social tensions in Kenya are mounting as workers confront inflation, austerity, unemployment and deteriorating living standards.

### **Workers at Dana Spicer Axle South Africa in Kariega walk out over redundancies**

Automotive workers at Dana Spicer Axle South Africa (DSASA) in Kariega have launched strike action against 60 retrenchments.

National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and UASA members walked out 18 May, after negotiations with management collapsed following two months of consultations. The position of the unions is not to fight redundancies but negotiate severance terms.

The company's retrenchment proposals, including a one-off gratuity payment of just R5,000, were rejected by workers, who demanded substantially higher compensation and meaningful negotiations over severance conditions.

NUMSA regional secretary Mziyanda Twani accused DSASA management of refusing to provide audited financial statements, preventing workers from assessing the company's financial position or negotiating improved voluntary severance and retirement packages. Workers further alleged that management sought to divide the workforce by selectively limiting voluntary packages to certain employees with shorter service records, while rejecting demands for leave pay and bonuses extending to June 2026.

The company escalated the confrontation by obtaining an urgent court interdict against the strike.

The conflict at DSASA reflects the accelerating de-industrialisation of Nelson Mandela Bay, where the automotive and manufacturing sectors have long formed the backbone of the regional economy. Retrenchments, plant closures and attacks on wages are increasingly being driven by corporations seeking to protect profits at workers' expense, while unions face mounting pressure from rank-and-file workers demanding resistance to job destruction.

The crisis in Kariega is part of a broader assault on industrial workers across South Africa, where unemployment, poverty and social inequality continue to deepen under conditions of economic stagnation and declining investment in productive industry.

### **Residents of informal settlements in Katlehong, South Africa protest lack of infrastructure, digging up highway to Johannesburg**

Residents of the Tsietsi Phase 5 and 6 informal settlements in Katlehong, South Africa intensified their protests at decades of neglect by the Ekurhuleni municipality last week, digging up sections of the R550 main road to Johannesburg.

Demonstrators blocked access roads after Mayor Nkosindiphile Xhakaza failed to attend a scheduled community meeting on the area's worsening service delivery crisis. Xhakaza's no-show, after recently visiting neighbouring settlements, was widely seen as another sign of contempt toward working-class communities living in desperate conditions.

For nearly 30 years residents have endured inadequate access to electricity, sanitation and water, while successive municipal administrations ignored repeated appeals for intervention.

Families continue to rely on illegal electricity connections and overcrowded chemical toilets shared by dozens of households, while limited communal taps fail to meet the needs of the growing population. A long-promised sewer infrastructure project has stalled, exposing the chronic failure of local government to provide even basic services.

The protests reflect the deepening social crisis confronting workers and the poor across South Africa. Unemployment, inequality and collapsing infrastructure continue to fuel growing anger against the political establishment.

While the municipality spends money each month renting chemical toilets from private contractors, permanent sanitation infrastructure remains unbuilt. Promises of formal housing and electrification dating back years have produced little beyond abandoned infrastructure projects and stripped electricity poles.

### **Further protests by students at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa over lack of facilities**

Students at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa continue to protest deteriorating conditions in campus residences during the examination schedule.

Demonstrators condemn intolerable living conditions, including inadequate shower facilities, poor cooking infrastructure and unreliable Wi-Fi access, which have disrupted their studies. The protests reflect mounting anger among students who say their repeated complaints have been ignored while university authorities press ahead with examinations.

The conditions at UWC expose the broader crisis confronting higher education institutions across South Africa, where chronic underfunding, overcrowding and decaying infrastructure increasingly undermine students' ability to complete their studies.

These conditions reveal widening educational inequality and the daily reality facing working-class and poor students, who struggle to survive in deteriorating campus environments.

The ongoing protests are part of a broader wave of social discontent among youth and workers confronting worsening living conditions and institutional neglect. Universities, operating under mounting financial pressures and austerity measures, have increasingly shifted the burden of systemic failures onto students while limiting meaningful engagement with their demands.

At UWC, the determination of students to continue protesting despite exams underscores growing opposition to conditions that threaten both their education and future prospects in a society marked by deep inequality and economic insecurity.



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**