

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.

French rail workers strike against low pay and deteriorating conditions

Nearly one in two rail workers for the SNCF national railway in France held a 24-hour strike Wednesday, causing disruption on both regional and high-speed cross-country lines.

The members of the CGT, UNSA, Sud and CFDT rail unions demand salary increases and a halt to restructuring and outsourcing, which they say is creeping privatisation.

Specialist clinical scientists at five main hospitals across Ireland strike for pay recognition

On Tuesday, all of Ireland's 25 cardiovascular perfusionists held a one-day stoppage at the five major central hospitals in Dublin, Cork and Galway, causing 14 cancelled operations.

Perfusionists are responsible for managing a patient's heart and lung functions during cardiac surgery and other surgery that requires a cardiopulmonary bypass.

The Fórsa trade union members say the Health Service Executive refused to follow a Labour Court recommendation that they are paid the same as similarly qualified clinical scientists. Further strikes are planned for June 16 and 17.

A thousand Decathlon store workers in France strike for more pay and better conditions

Over 1,000 workers at the French multinational sports goods retailer, Decathlon, went on a national strike throughout France Saturday to demand wage increases and improved working conditions. Staff demonstrated outside stores and over 5,500 signatures were gathered in an online petition.

Members of the five different unions involved complain that Decathlon has made record profits. However, only the most poorly paid have been brought up to the minimum wage and all workers are being asked to increase productivity with fewer staff.

Decathlon has over 1,900 stores in 82 countries and employs 103,000

worldwide. It reported net profits of €910 million for 2025, up 16 percent on the previous year.

Students and teachers demonstrate in Brussels, Belgium against increased tuition fees and longer working hours

On June 4, thousands of students and teachers demonstrated in Brussels, Belgium against education spending cuts proposed by the French Community government in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. This followed a recent 10-day strike by the French-speaking teachers against the austerity plans.

The protest, which began with a mass rally near the French Community Parliament, was directed against austerity measures that would increase annual university tuition fees from €835 to €1,194 and require secondary school teachers to work two additional classroom hours each week without extra pay.

The proposed measures provoked widespread opposition among students and education workers, who warn access to education will be further undermined and conditions in schools worsened.

Thousands of teachers at Belgian French-speaking schools strike against austerity cuts

On June 4, thousands of teachers at French-speaking schools in Brussels and Wallonia, Belgium, walked out, following a ten-day strike ending May 27.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions of Belgium-Education members denounce government austerity plans, including a 10 percent increase in teaching hours for upper secondary school teachers, a stricter sick leave policy and the raising of tuition fees for higher education students.

Despite mass opposition, on June 5 the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation voted to implement a budget of deficit reduction measures.

Academic staff at Goldsmiths, University of London begin indefinite stoppage over threat of job cuts

Academic staff at Goldsmiths, University of London began an indefinite strike on Monday over the university's plans to cut around 270 academic

and professional services staff to achieve savings of around £20 million. The cuts would affect around a fifth of the workforce.

The University and College Union (UCU) members voted in April by over 80 percent to walk out and by more than 90 percent for action short of a strike (ASOS) in response to the threatened job cuts.

On May 27, they began the ASOS, which included a marking and assessment boycott (MAB). In response to the MAB, the university refused to pay any staff participating, in effect a lockout. The UCU members then upped their action with the all-out strike.

Goldsmiths has already pushed through two lots of job redundancies in the last five years to cut costs and plans further job cuts in September.

The UCU refuses to mobilise its members in national coordinated action against attacks on jobs and conditions in higher education. Around 30,000 jobs have been lost over the past three years, with job cuts most recently planned at Sheffield Hallam and Nottingham Universities.

Stoppages by leisure centre workers at London council over working conditions and safety concerns

Tuesday saw staff at Tower Hamlet Be Well council leisure centres in London walk out over working conditions and safety concerns. The centres affected are the John Orwell, Mile End, Poplar, Whitechapel, York Hall and Tiller. Staff taking part include managers, lifeguards, fitness instructors, customer service workers and swimming teachers. They will also walk out on Friday.

The Unite union members are protesting insecure contracts, mismanagement and safety concerns over levels of staffing, including lone working, arbitrary rotas and being asked to cover roles such as swimming instruction or cleaning toilets, which are not covered by their job descriptions.

Tower Hamlets council took over the running of the leisure centres from Greenwich Leisure Ltd in May 2024. The Unite union members voted by a 100 percent majority on a near two-thirds turnout in February. Additional strike dates are scheduled for June 14, 15, 17, 20, 23, 25 and 28.

Building and timber merchant workers in Newry, Northern Ireland begin all-out stoppage over pay

Around 40 workers at Newry-based Haldane-Fisher building and timber merchant in Northern Ireland began an all-out stoppage Wednesday.

The Unite union members rejected a below-inflation two percent pay offer on top of years of seeing their pay eroded by low settlements, which left them low-paid workers.

Haldane-Fisher supplies timber and construction supplies across the province and the stoppage is expected to cause significant disruption.

Stoppage of logistics workers at Glasgow, Scotland shipyards over pay

Logistics workers employed by GXO Logistics providing support to BAE Systems shipyards in Scotland struck this week. The workers based at Govan and Scotstoun shipyards were on strike Monday and Tuesday.

Those working at the BAE Systems hub at Linwood were set to walk out Thursday and at Eurocentral, Lanarkshire, are due to stop work Friday.

The GMB members, who supply logistics support to BAE Systems, voted to strike by a 97 percent majority after rejecting a three-year pay offer giving 3.5 percent the first year followed by three percent in the two successive years. The logistics workers are seeking pay parity with BAE Systems staff with whom they work alongside.

The stoppages are expected to disrupt work on the already delayed building of HMS Glasgow; the first of eight Type 26 anti-submarine frigates being built for the Royal Navy.

Ongoing protests in Iran over impact of economic sanctions and US/Israel attacks

On June 7, Social Security retirees in Haft Tappeh, Karkheh and Shush, Iran, took to the streets in further protests. Among their demands were for pensions to be raised above the 700 million rial cost of living base and for free healthcare.

June 7 also saw protests by dismissed workers from the Pars Steel Sistan factory, who were demanding to be reinstated.

On June 6, simultaneous protests by thousands of high school students and university entrance exam applicants took place across at least 20 cities including Arak, Isfahan, Mashhad and Tehran. They were protesting against educational policy and inequality that puts students from poorer regions at a disadvantage, among other issues.

Also on June 6, market traders and poultry sellers in the city of Sanandaj closed up their shops, protesting soaring prices and runaway rates of inflation. On the same day, academic staff at Kurdistan University issued a strike threat against delays in implementing a legally issued salary ruling approved in March this year.

On June 5, medical students at Bushehr University held a protest over the poor quality of meals provided. Also, on June 5, pre-hospital emergency staff in Iranshahr held protests over unpaid wages and benefits and threats of dismissal.

Following decades of sanctions, the US is blockading all ships in and out of Iran. The blockade is strangling its economy; in addition, intermittent military attacks are compounding its economic crisis.

Protests in Syria over deteriorating living conditions

Protests took place this week in the al-Hol area east of Hasakah province in Syria. Protesting deteriorating living conditions, demonstrators blocked roads used by tankers delivering fuel throughout Syria. The protests came as calls were made for demonstrations across Syria's Jazira region.

West Bank public doctors strike continues as Israel squeezes finances

Public doctors in the West Bank are continuing their six-month strike protesting the Palestinian Authority's (PA) failure to pay their wages in full. In turn, the PA has been implementing financial cuts to health funding due to Israel indefinitely withholding Palestinian custom monies since October 2023.

The Palestinian nurses' union announced it will hold protests over the

PA's failure to pay nurses' salaries in full, and the PA's plans, announced in May, to reduce their working hours.

Public hospitals are operating at reduced capacity, forcing many patients to use private hospitals.

Mining workers in Congo begin strike, facing off management's threats

Workers at the Tenke Fungurume Mining (TFM) copper and cobalt mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo launched strike action on June 1, disrupting production at one of the world's largest copper operation.

The mine, owned by Chinese mining giant CMOC, produced around 519,000 tonnes of copper last year, accounting for approximately 15 percent of Congo's total output. Workers walked out in protest against a new collective bargaining agreement, saying they had been excluded from negotiations and demanding improved wages, housing allowances and healthcare benefits.

Management responded with threats combined with claims of possible financial incentives. In a letter to employees, TFM declared the strike "illegal" and warned workers who failed to return to their jobs by June 3 would face dismissal proceedings.

At the same time, the company offered a \$500 "loyalty bonus" to employees to scab and \$1,000 to those who allegedly faced pressure for refusing to join the action. The company launched investigations into alleged damage to equipment and promised to refer cases to the Congolese authorities.

Despite the enormous wealth generated by the multinational mining corporations in Congo's strategic copper and cobalt sector, workers continue to face poor pay and inadequate social benefits.

Over the past decade, massive Chinese investment has transformed the country into one of the world's leading suppliers of minerals essential for electric vehicles, renewable energy systems and other technologies.

Stoppage by Msunduzi municipal workers in South Africa over pay and conditions

A strike by Msunduzi municipal workers in South Africa over a salary dispute began June 3, disrupting refuse collection, water services and electricity operations across the city.

South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) members are demanding unpaid allowances and improved health and safety conditions. They blocked access to the municipality's Doull Road depot, limiting the movement of vehicles and staff and preventing many essential services from operating during normal hours. As a result, uncollected rubbish is accumulating in the central business district and surrounding areas, while delays in infrastructure repairs continue to affect residents and businesses.

Only a small number of employees volunteered for night shifts, leaving many water, electricity and sanitation issues unresolved as the dispute continues.

The strike highlights growing tensions over workers' demands and the broader challenges facing municipal service delivery. Representatives of SAMWU held discussions with city management, which reportedly committed to address workers within seven days.

South African residents from informal settlements in Springs march to demand jobs

About 100 residents from the Boret, N17 and Daggafontein informal settlements in Springs, Gauteng Province in South Africa, marched through the Nuffield industrial area on Tuesday, demanding factories provide jobs for unemployed local workers.

Organised by community groups including the Duduza Community Coalition and the Africa Mayibuye Youth Movement, the protest reflected the deepening social crisis facing working-class communities, where unemployment, poverty and precarious work have left many families struggling to survive.

The march continued to several factories, including Nuffield Scrap Metal, Bophyld Steel and Engineering, Proactive Mining and Supply, and Intermech, where management representatives informed protesters that there were no current vacancies. Demonstrators said the action is part of an ongoing campaign against unemployment, and the lack of opportunities confronting township and informal settlement residents. Competition for scarce jobs has intensified as employers seek the cheapest available labour.

South Africa's latest Quarterly Labour Force survey revealed 345,000 job losses across the country in the first quarter of 2026 and unemployment climbing to 32.7 percent or 8.1 million.

Among the age group 15 to 34, unemployment reached 45.8 percent, including 3.9 million South Africans aged 15 to 24 or 37.6 percent of this age group not in employment, education or training.

Lecturers on two-week strike at Federal College of Education in Enugu, Nigeria

Lecturers at the Federal College of Education (Technical), Enugu, Nigeria, began a two-week warning strike on June 3 after shutting down academic activities over the provost's refusal to address their long-standing grievances.

The action followed the expiry of a seven-day ultimatum issued by the College of Education Academic Staff Union, which accused management of ignoring repeated appeals and failing to resolve disputes affecting staff welfare and conditions. The strike has disrupted teaching, administrative activities and other operations at the institution.

According to union representatives, lecturers are protesting victimisation of staff, irregularities in college administration and management's failure to engage with workers' concerns. The union said repeated attempts to secure dialogue with college authorities had failed.

The strike underscores the deepening crisis confronting education workers across Nigeria amid chronic underfunding, deteriorating infrastructure and mounting pressures on public institutions. Lecturers have increasingly resorted to strikes and protests to press their demands, while federal and state governments continue to impose austerity.

Nigerian teachers strike to oppose abductions and armed raids

On June 1, teachers across Nigeria launched strike action and protests against the escalating insecurity that has allowed schools to be targeted by kidnappers and armed gangs.

The Nigeria Union of Teachers, backed by the Nigeria Labour Congress

(NLC), organised the nationwide action following a series of abductions involving teachers, pupils and students, including recent mass kidnappings in Oyo State. The union declared educators can no longer continue working under conditions in which their lives and those of their students are constantly at risk.

Union leaders are responding to growing anger in the working class against impoverished living standards, which have led to kidnappings for ransom. The NLC has threatened wider solidarity action if federal and state authorities fail to address the security situation and secure the release of abducted victims.



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