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.

Spanish ground-based workers at Barcelona airport strike over working conditions

An indefinite strike by around 1,180 Groundforce employees at Barcelona Airport in Spain began August 4, with workers walking out over worsening working conditions and inadequate health and safety protection. The strike affects baggage handling, check-in, boarding and aircraft ground operations for numerous international airlines.

The General Confederation of Labour union members denounce chronic understaffing, deteriorating workplace safety and other long-standing grievances. Their dispute follows airport handling strikes across Spain earlier in the year, and reflects growing opposition among ground staff to intensifying workloads and declining conditions imposed by subcontracting companies.

Thousands of Audi auto workers in Neckarsulm, Germany protest over planned plant closure

Thousands of Audi workers demonstrated at the company's Neckarsulm plant in southwest Germany July 29 against plans by parent company Volkswagen that could ultimately lead to the factory's closure as part of a sweeping restructuring programme.

Around 6,000 workers joined the protest, demanding guarantees for the future of the site, which employs about 15,000 people, amid proposals that could close four German plants by 2030.

Workers say closure of the historic Neckarsulm facility would devastate thousands of families and have severe consequences for the regional economy. They insisted they should not bear the cost of the company's declining profits.

Irish criminal legal aid solicitors in ongoing strike over new payment scheme

Criminal defence solicitors providing legal aid across Ireland have continued strike action begun June 17 against the government's overhaul of criminal legal aid payments. Under the legal aid system, the government pays so that those who cannot afford lawyers are able to receive representation and professional advice.

The dispute centres on the introduction of a €520 flat fee for District Court legal aid cases, replacing the previous system of payment for individual court appearances. The Law Society members argue the new scheme will slash incomes in lengthy and complex cases while further undermining an already overstretched justice system. They warn that the unilateral changes in funding effectively strip clients of their right to legal representation.

French rail workers across Normandy strike for better working conditions

Rail workers across Normandy, France, including drivers, conductors and other rail staff, staged a three-day strike July 31 to August 2, disrupting regional SNCF/Nomad services during the peak summer holiday season.

The SUD Rail union members protest worsening working conditions, staffing shortages and management's reorganisation plans. They say increased workloads and declining staffing levels are undermining both workers 'conditions and passenger safety.

The strike coincided with major engineering works on parts of the Normandy network, further disrupting rail travel and exposing the impact of years of underinvestment and restructuring on France's rail system.

Rail support staff at UK rail company walk out over low pay

Outsourced cleaning and catering staff working for the TransPennine rail company began a 48-hour strike on Friday 31 July. TransPennine passenger services serve the north of England. Cleaning staff are employed by Bidvest Noonan and the catering workers by Rail Gourmet.

Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members at both companies were protesting low pay. The RMT has called for the cleaning and catering services to be brought back in-house. They held joint picket lines at rail stations across the network, including Manchester Piccadilly, Liverpool Lime Street, Glasgow and Newcastle.

Strike of council workers in Great Yarmouth, UK over pay

Around 100 workers employed by Great Yarmouth Services (GYS) are set to walk out Thursday and Friday. GYS is a Great Yarmouth councilowned company. Those set to walk out are employed as refuse collectors, street cleaners, grave diggers and landscape workers.

The Unite, Unison and GMB members have rejected a 3.3 percent pay offer. They are demanding a 20 percent raise to bring them into line with council staff performing similar roles in the neighbouring councils of Norwich, Broadland and Lowestoft. According to Unite, a majority of the workers are earning just above the legal minimum wage of £12.71an hour.

A further three-day stoppage is scheduled to begin August 10, and additional dates may be announced.

Further stoppage by lecturers at Scotland's Glasgow Caledonian University over job cuts

Lecturers at Glasgow Caledonian University held a one-day stoppage on Tuesday.

The members of the Educational Institute of Scotland-University Lecturers Association (EIS-ULA) are opposing the university's plans to cut around 100 posts. For the EIS-ULA, the major sticking point is the refusal of the university to rule out compulsory redundancies. The EIS-ULA members voted by a near 96 percent majority earlier this year for the action in opposition to the job losses, the extra workload it would mean for remaining staff and to protect course provision and research capacity.

Previous stoppages took place June 30, July 1 and 2. Stoppages are also planned for September 7, 8 and 10. All the stoppage dates coincide with graduation dates at the university.

Food production workers in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland walk out over pay

Workers employed by Pilgrim's Foods at their site in Enniskillen began a four-day stoppage on Tuesday. The site, which produces meat products including ready meals, employs around 300 people.

Unite the union says its members are "seeking a reasonable pay increase that is applied to all employees within the bargaining unit and reflects the increased cost of living." They are also demanding parity of working conditions, as currently day shift workers do not get a paid break while workers on other shifts do.

Parent company, Pilgrim's Europe posted an operating profit of over £98 million for 2024, up a third on the previous year.

Rally of journalists in Gaza calls for release of imprisoned colleagues

On Monday, a group of journalists held a rally outside the International Committee of the Red Cross building in Gaza. They called for the release of journalists held in Israeli prisons for reporting on the war in Gaza.

Journalist Imad Al-Ifrenci, himself a former prisoner of the Israelis, told the rally that over 140 journalists had been imprisoned by Israel since the war against Gaza began. Fifty remain incarcerated.

Middle East Monitor cited a report documenting over 4,000 violations against journalists between October 2023 and June 2026. The report also noted the arrest of over 190 journalists and the destruction of the homes of 140 journalists. It further reported that 264 Palestinian journalists had been killed by the Israelis since 8 October 2023, including eight between January and June this year.

Egyptian textile workers strike over low pay, defying company union

Workers at the Misr El Amria Spinning and Weaving Company in Alexandria, Egypt continued their strike for a second day on July 29, shutting down production. The workers rejected management's decision to calculate a 12 percent special allowance on their basic wage rather than the higher social insurance wage.

The strikers are also demanding that a monthly cost-of-living allowance be increased from 600 Egyptian pounds to 1,300 pounds, matching payments at other textile companies. Workers said management had previously promised to apply financial benefits granted elsewhere in the state-owned textile sector.

Workers rejected an appeal by the company union committee to resume production in return for another management promise to consider their demands within a week. Misr El Amria workers have mounted several strikes over wages and allowances since 2025, with their action being repeatedly suspended when management made pledges that were then not honoured.

Local government workers in Cross River State, Nigeria protest not being paid

On July 29, local government workers in Cross River State, Nigeria demonstrated in state capital Calabar over 11 months of unpaid wages. Despite heavy rain, workers from several local government areas marched to the Governor's Office demanding immediate payment and their inclusion in the state payroll.

The workers, who were recruited in 2025 and have continued reporting for duty without receiving any salary, said they were unable to feed their families and had been forced to survive on loans from relatives and friends. Protestors said more than six of their colleagues had died during the protracted payroll verification process.

Secretary to the State Government Anthony Enoh appealed for further patience, claiming that a panel established after an earlier protest had completed its report and implementation was underway. He promised the government would take action within two weeks. The workers have already laboured for almost a year without being paid.

Nigerian weather agency workers demand resumption of strike

Workers at the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) are demanding their national unions restart suspended strike action over unpaid wages and allowances. Employees are owed nine months' arrears from the 2019 minimum wage and four months arising from the 2024 minimum wage.

The union suspended an earlier stoppage after the aviation minister and NiMet management agreed to a timetable for paying the outstanding entitlements. Management failed to honour the agreement, while a pay relativity adjustment scheduled for June 2026 was also delayed.

The union branches have asked the National Joint Action Committee and national secretariats to reactivate the strike within one week. Workers are angry that the union's repeated appeals and negotiations had done nothing to resolve their grievances, as rising prices cut into their standard of living.

Kenyan health workers strike over unpaid salaries, refusal to employ interns

Nurses and clinical officers in Kenya's Rift Valley region have launched strikes, paralysing public healthcare services in Kericho, Uasin Gishu and Turkana counties. In Kericho, members of the Kenya National Union of Nurses walked out over the county government's failure to implement and sign the 2017 collective bargaining agreement.

Nurses in Uasin Gishu began strike action July 30 over delayed salary payments, stalled promotions, failure to employ interns and the non-implementation of previous return-to-work agreements. Union officials said some nurses had worked for more than 30 years without promotion and vowed the strike would continue until their demands were addressed.

The stoppages have deepened the healthcare crisis across the region. Kidney patients in remote areas of Turkana reportedly face shortages of essential medicines and services, while county officials have sought to blame the disruption on a nationwide dispute being handled by the Council of Governors.

Waste collection strike to demand permanent jobs continues in Johannesburg, South Africa

Casual workers at Pikitup, the municipal waste management company in Johannesburg, South Africa, are continuing their stoppage begun July 8-9.

The protesting workers, employed by private contractors providing services to Pikitup, are demanding to be absorbed into permanent municipal jobs after years of insecure employment.

On Monday, workers blocked access to six Pikitup depots, preventing refuse trucks from leaving. The action spread from earlier protests at the Marlboro depot to facilities at Waterval, Roodepoort, Randburg, Orange Farm and Avalon.

While Pikitup insisted its permanent workforce was not on strike, the blockades halted refuse collection in large parts of the city, leaving rubbish to accumulate in residential areas.

The dispute highlights the widespread use of outsourced and temporary labour by municipalities, leaving thousands of workers trapped in precarious jobs without the wages, benefits or security afforded to permanent workers.

Heineken workers in South Africa walk out over pay and conditions

Workers at Heineken Beverages, near Johannesburg, South Africa walked out on a protected strike despite intimidation from management.

The Food and Allied Workers Union members are demanding a 7 percent pay rise, together with housing and meal allowances and employer-funded weekend transport—modest demands to keep pace with a punishing cost of living driven by inflation in food, fuel and housing costs across South Africa. The workers rejected a company 5 percent offer.

The union bureaucracy's strategy of confining the fight to "lawful collective bargaining" and appeals to employer good faith offers no guarantee of victory against a transnational corporation with vastly greater resources and the backing of the capitalist state. What is posed is the need for South African workers to link their struggle with beverage and food-sector workers internationally, who face the same employers, the same austerity, and the same demand that they absorb the costs of a crisis not of their making.