# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East and Africa

**20 August 2026**

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

**French firefighters stop work and protest for more staff and resources amidst record summer temperatures**

Firefighters across France staged a 24-hour strike and protests August 13 to denounce chronic understaffing, inadequate equipment and mounting pressure on emergency services. The action took place amid a severe summer season in the country and throughout Europe that has been marked by large forest fires.

The most severe wildfires were in the Gironde/Bordeaux region, which forced the evacuation of 220,000 people.

The members of nine different unions covering emergency workers criticised the government, demanding increased funding for mass recruitment, improvements in equipment and health and safety measures. The fire service budget has been subject to yearly austerity cuts, including a reduction of 75 million euros for 2026. A further large-scale mobilisation is scheduled in Paris on September 29.

**EasyJet cabin crew in France strike for improved working conditions**

Around half of the 900 France-based cabin crew working for budget airline EasyJet in France staged a two-day strike August 15-16 at Paris Orly, Paris Charles de Gaulle, Lyon, Nice, Nantes and Bordeaux airports. Around 100 flights were cancelled. A strike notice remains in force until September 2, leaving open the possibility of further action.

The UNAC-CFE-CGC, SNPNC-FO and UNPNC-CFDT union members protest poor working conditions, particularly around staff scheduling, causing staff exhaustion and making it impossible to organise personal lives. Rosters are altered constantly, with some reports indicating a frequency of up to 50 to 60 times a week and usually with only 24-48 hours' notice.

EasyJet was recently sold for $5.7 billion to Apollo Global Management, which managed assets of $840 billion in 2025.

**Thousands of German port workers in warning stoppage for pay increase**

Around 11,000 port workers at the German seaports of Hamburg, Bremerhaven, Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Emden and Brake took part in a 24-hour warning strike August 17, bringing cargo and container handling to a standstill.

The Verdi service union members demand an 8.2 percent wage increase, or at least €2.50 more per hour, over a 12-month contract. Port workers rejected the employers' latest offer of a 5.1 percent increase over 19 months with some additional payments, as inadequate, particularly for lower-paid workers.

**Tax officials in Greece strike over pay and working conditions**

Thousands of Greek tax office (AADE) employees began a 10-day partial strike August 17-26, which coincides with the peak tourist season and the revenue authority's intensified campaign against tax evasion in tourist areas. The workers have withdrawn from preventive on-site tax inspections and refuse to drive official transport but will remain at their posts and continue other duties.

The Panhellenic Federation of Tax Employees union members protest chronic understaffing, the use of inadequate work vehicles and poor working conditions. They complain they are not paid for overtime and receive insufficient allowances for on-site inspection work.

The workers also oppose AADE's plans to reorganise local tax offices into centralised services and point out the revenue authority has 11,945 employees when 16,120 posts are needed.

**UK cancer research facility staff escalate strike action for pay restoration**

Last week, hundreds of workers at the UK Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) in London escalated their series of stoppages begun in June to an indefinite strike. ICR's sites at Sutton and Chelsea are taking part in the walkout.

The striking ICR workers include laboratory scientists, research assistants, technicians, clinical research staff, statisticians, and other scientific and technical staff supporting cancer research and clinical trials.

The Unite union members rejected a 4 percent pay offer. The employer has refused to implement an incremental pay system to address pay restoration to make up for the real term decline in wages by 16 percent. Several years of below-inflation pay rises have left many staff earning just above the voluntary London Living Wage figure of £14.80 an hour.

ICR management have brought in agency staff to undermine the action which Unite has described as illegal, but this has not been matched by organising any solidarity action against the strike breaking operation.

Unite regional officer Will Searby instead warned ICR of “creating further anger” and urged management to “come back to the table with an improved offer.”

**Food production workers in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland escalate strike over pay**

Workers at Pilgrim’s Foods in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland began a 12-day stoppage Monday. Pilgrim’s, which employs around 300 at the site, produces meat products including ready meals. Workers previously held a four-day stoppage at the beginning of the month.

Unite say 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.

Unite reports the escalation follows the breakdown of talks last week between the union and employer under the auspices of the Labour Relations Agency, the Northern Ireland government mediation body.

In 2024, parent company Pilgrim’s Europe posted an operating profit of over £98 million, up a third on the previous year.

**Lifeboat manufacturing and maintenance workers on the Isle of Wight, UK, strike over closure of centre and redundancy terms**

UK workers employed by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) at its Inshore Lifeboat Centre in East Cowes on the Isle of Wight walked out on Wednesday.

The RNLI is a charity that provides sea rescue services through its volunteer lifeboat crews. Its East Cowes site supplies and maintains lifeboats for more than half of the RNLI’s 238 stations across the UK. The RNLI plans to close the East Cowes site by the end of 2027 and transfer operations to Poole in Dorset, affecting up to 70 jobs locally.

Unite has focused the strike on securing improved redundancy terms rather than preventing the closure of the site which has been in operation since 1963. The RNLI has offered affected employees support including voluntary redundancy, redeployment, relocation assistance and career-transition support, while saying it will guarantee job opportunities in Poole for production employees where possible. However, many workers say they could not afford to relocate to Poole which is around sixty miles away. Housing in Poole is expensive as it is a premier coastal lifestyle destination attracting wealthy London buyers and retirees.

Unite members previously walked out on August 11 over the same issue and are due to strike again on August 25. The union was formally recognised last month as entitled to conduct collective bargaining on behalf of some of the Inshore Lifeboat Centre’s staff.

**Strike of art gallery attendants at Edinburgh’s National Galleries of Scotland over cuts**

Gallery attendants at the National Galleries of Scotland’s Edinburgh gallery walked out on Thursday. It was the fourth of a planned four days of stoppages, following strikes on August 8, 12 and 16.

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members are opposing imposed rota changes. They say the changes will mean reduced staffing levels, with some attendants being left in sole charge of large collections. This would make it harder for staff to take regular breaks and impose difficulties on staff with disabilities. It could also mean room and exhibition closures because of staff shortages.

Apart from striking, the PCS members are also refusing to wear uniforms when at work and are working to rule.

**Protests continue across Iran due to economy ravaged by sanctions and war**

Tuesday, August 11 saw a protest by nurses and medical staff at Hakim hospital in Nishapur. Their issues included unpaid performance bonuses, staff and equipment shortages as well as mandatory overtime.

The same day, Isfahan steel industry retirees protested outside the provincial governorate office for a fourth consecutive day. They were demanding the upgrading of their pensions.

The previous day there had been pay protests by Pars Oil and Gas Company workers. Their protests coincided with protests by telecommunications retirees in Hamadan, Mashhad, Rasht and Tabriz over inadequate pensions.

The Iranian economy has been devastated after decades of US sanctions exacerbated by the US blockade of ships in and out of Iran, along with military attacks.

**Tens of thousands of Kenyan health workers in national strike over pay and conditions**

Health workers across Kenya are continuing widespread strike action that has severely disrupted public hospitals. More than 32,000 nurses began a nationwide walkout on July 29, joining industrial action involving other health workers.

Nurses are demanding completion of the 2025–2029 collective bargaining agreement, implementation of the 2017 return-to-work agreement and career progression guidelines, as well as permanent and pensionable contracts for Universal Health Coverage workers.

The stoppages involve nurses, clinical officers, laboratory staff, public health officers and pharmaceutical workers in various counties, with maternity, immunisation, diagnostic and other services curtailed. In Homa Bay, most public facilities were shut and most wards at the county referral hospital were not operating, while Level Two and Three facilities in Siaya have closed. More than 800 nurses remain off work in Mombasa.

The Council of Governors declared the action illegal and several counties, including Mombasa, Murang’a and Nyandarua, began disciplinary moves against strikers. Despite an August 5 court order directing nurses back to work, the dispute has continued. On August 18, the 20th day of the nurses’ strike, scheduled negotiations involving the union, Council of Governors and Salaries and Remuneration Commission were postponed until August 20, with the union calling for a further mass procession by nurses to government offices in Nairobi.

**Strikes at Nigerian universities over pay and funding**

A strike began at the Federal University of Agriculture, Kebbi State in Nigeria on August 18 over failure to implement a 2025 pay agreement. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members began a two-week warning strike, suspending lectures, examinations, supervision and academic activities.

At Enugu State University of Science and Technology a two-week warning strike is underway over the failure of the state government to pay the monthly subvention to the university since May 2025.

Lecturers at state universities in Abia, Imo, Nasarawa and Ondo states, Nigeria, began indefinite strikes on August 10-11 over unpaid entitlements and the failure of state governments to implement the 2025 federal government/ASUU agreement. The stoppages involve Abia State University, Imo State University, Nasarawa State University, Adekunle Ajasin University and Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology, halting lectures, examinations and other academic activities.

At Nasarawa State University, lecturers say they are owed more than N3 billion in Earned Academic Allowances, minimum-wage adjustments and approved salary increases. Imo lecturers are demanding unpaid salaries, promotion arrears dating to 2016, 21 months of withheld union dues and Earned Academic Allowances outstanding since 2009.

At Abia State University, demands include implementation of the 2025 pay agreement, payment of outstanding allowances dating back to 2009, regularisation of promotions and remittance of deductions taken from workers for their cooperative.

In Ondo state, lecturers at AAUA and OAUSTECH universities are demanding implementation of the agreement, including a 40 percent salary review and payment of arrears from January. The actions form part of a wider confrontation, with ASUU authorising branches at around 20 universities to begin procedures for strikes over non-implementation of the pay agreement.

**Residents of Warraq Island in Cairo, Egypt in a silent march to oppose displacement of residents for redevelopment**

Around 200 residents of Warraq Island in Cairo, Egypt staged a silent march on August 18 to the New Warraq City Development Authority, presenting demands opposing government attempts to displace residents for a major redevelopment project. The action was organised by the newly formed “Staying on Warraq Island” movement, which is demanding land on the island for replacement homes and urging residents not to sell their properties.

Residents are also demanding unrestricted regulated access to construction materials, removal of police checkpoints at ferry crossings, improved health services, restoration of the post office, sewage facilities and the closure of outstanding legal cases against island residents.

Earlier this month, dozens protested and blocked two ferries carrying construction materials to government projects, following clashes with security forces over searches and a ban preventing residents bringing building materials onto the island. Three residents detained in connection with the dispute were subsequently released.

The government has sought for years to clear substantial areas of Warraq for the New Warraq City or “Horus City” development, incorporating residential and investment towers, commercial areas and luxury housing. Authorities offered limited concessions allowing construction materials into designated areas, but residents reject proposals that could force families from traditional homes into apartments.

**Sugar workers in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa strike over pay**

On August 15, workers in the sugar industry in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa began protected strike action after wage negotiations with employers ended in deadlock. Negotiations had been underway since February.

The United Association of South Africa (UASA) members voted by a majority in favour of industrial action.

The dispute takes place amid a worsening cost-of-living crisis for workers and their families, with rising prices for food, fuel, electricity, transport and housing which have increasingly eroded household incomes.

The UASA called on employers to return to negotiations despite months of talks failing.

**Students at Cape Peninsula University of Technology protest rising cost of higher education**

Thousands of Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) students in South Africa have been protesting for several days over a proposed payment plan for student fees. Student representatives say the changes would make education inaccessible for poorer students.

The protesters oppose CPUT’s financial recovery measures, including a proposed R7,000 fee upfront for accommodation and fees. Returning students with debts to the university would have to pay a percentage of fees owed upfront.

University management responded by disrupting students’ access to accommodation and shutting all campuses. The conflict intensified after protests reportedly involved damage to university property, prompting management to justify the evacuation as a safety measure, forcing large numbers from their residences and leaving many stranded.

The confrontation at CPUT is part of the broader crisis in South African higher education, where chronic underfunding, unemployment and deep social inequality place working-class students under relentless strain.

**Protesters from Mfuleni township in Cape Town, South Africa demand basic infrastructure**

More than 100 shack dwellers from Mfuleni township in Cape Town, South Africa marched to the Western Cape Premier’s office and Cape Town Civic Centre on August 14, demanding access to basic services, including water and electricity.

The protest followed a shack fire last November in which Noyiba Thini died from her injuries. Protest organiser Bathandwa Gali said residents lacked sufficient water even to extinguish burning shacks.

Residents described conditions of extreme deprivation. In Ndofaya informal settlement, Siphumelelisa Gogotya and her grandchildren have no electricity and are forced to study by candlelight, creating the constant danger of another shack fire. She spends around R200 a month on firewood and borrows money to buy candles. Residents must queue for water at communal taps, with Gogotya waking at 3 a.m. to avoid the longest queues.

The protesters demand roads through the informal settlements to allow emergency and police vehicles to enter, as well as their own toilets and water taps. Community leader Phumeza Maxakatho said residents currently depend on formal households for water and toilet facilities.

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