# Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

**27 August 2026**

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

**Indefinite strike over pay and conditions resumed at Airbus Spain**

Airbus workers in Spain this week resumed an indefinite strike from August 25, rejecting the company's latest pay offer and mediation proposal.

Members of the CGT, UGT and UTIL unions, which represent around 40 percent of Airbus Spain's 14,000 workers, took part. Unions say 90 percent of eligible workers were involved. The dispute is not limited to a particular trade or occupation but involves production/workshop and office personnel.

The strike follows 22 days of action in July. Workers are demanding pay rises linked to inflation, sick-leave benefits and the restoration of previous remote-working arrangements. Airbus last week announced it would allow staff to continue working from home an average two days a week following July's strikes.

Airbus has agreed to withdraw a punitive absenteeism monitoring system and reimburse workers fined under it. The company has also nominally agreed to an inflation-linked rise but given no firm commitments yet.

Plant-level assemblies on Monday rejected Airbus's other proposals on pay and conditions, accusing the company of vagueness over timelines and financial commitments. Unions said the company was deferring key issues like holidays, flexible hours and company transport for employees to and from Airbus sites.

Airbus has eight sites in Spain, producing military transport planes and parts for commercial planes and satellites. The company has an annual delivery target of 870 jets. Unions say the stoppages have already slowed production.

**Union calls off Norwegian air traffic controllers' strike**

Norwegian air traffic controllers returned to work Monday after a weekend of strike action disrupted most air traffic into and across the country. The strike was initially suspended for negotiations before being called off completely.

The strike began Friday, with an initial group of 12 controllers at Avinor, the state-owned company that manages Norway's airports. All flights were cancelled for five hours, with a limited number of arrivals and departures allowed later in the day. Airports across the country were increasingly affected. Oslo Gardermoen was shut down completely on Sunday.

The strike by Norsk Flygelederforening members was called over long shifts and limited breaks. Union leader Robert Gjønnes told press that shifts were "not regulated as they should be," leading to duties of up to 16 hours without a break "in certain situations." Gjønnes said they wanted to establish a proper framework but did not think Avinor (represented by the employers' organisation Spekter) "will enter into a dialogue about this."

Air traffic controllers are relatively well paid because of the skills and stresses involved in this safety-critical role. The employers presented the "unreasonable" disruption of travel as a wages dispute. Spekter's Anne-Kari Bratten said controllers had turned down a wage offer amounting to more than 4 percent.

Details of the agreement that led the union to call off the strike were not disclosed, with the negotiating organisations hiding behind confidentiality clauses. Gjønnes spoke only of "professional and good dialogue." Bratten said a "process for senior policy" had been established allowing more time off for controllers aged over 55.

*Dagens Næringsliv* (DN) reported that controllers with more than 20 years of seniority will see bigger pay rises than their younger colleagues. DN reports average salaries of NOK 1.66 million ($160,000). Senior controllers will receive an additional NOK 72,000, while junior colleagues will receive an extra NOK 24,000.

**Strike by air traffic control staff at Norwich Airport, UK over pay and conditions**

Air traffic control staff at Norwich Airport, England are set to hold a 24-hour stoppage this Friday. The strike will mean cancellation of all flights and closure of the airport.

The Prospect union members are seeking a 10 percent pay rise to bring them into line with UK air traffic control staff pay standards. They are also seeking improvements to pension entitlements and maternity and paternity pay. Norwich Airport Limited has only offered 3 percent for 2026 and the same figure for 2027.

Prospect has not stated the number of air traffic controllers involved in the dispute. In the ballot 100 percent of members voted for action short of a strike (ASOS) and 78 percent were willing to take strike action. This was based on a 100 percent turnout.

Air traffic controllers began action short of a strike on 17 August, including working strictly to contract and refusing non-contractual overtime. The action led to the temporary closure of Norwich Airport for five hours on 21 August, from 08:00 to 13:00, with several flights cancelled.

**Strike by hospital staff in Northwest England over overtime payments**

Around 350 staff working for Northern Care Alliance Foundation Trust (NCA) walked out Monday and Wednesday and are due to walk out Friday.

The workers are employed as nurses, clinical support workers, housekeepers and in other roles. NCA runs the Salford Royal Hospital, Royal Oldham Hospital, Rochdale Infirmary and the Fairfield Hospital in Bury.

The Unison union members are protesting the trust's use of an outside agency, NHS Professionals, to manage overtime arrangements at its four hospitals. They say that they should be entitled to time and a half when doing overtime. They report that in some cases they end up being paid less than the amount they would be entitled to for a normal shift. According to Unison, some workers are losing around £80 per shift. Many workers are working overtime because of staff shortages resulting from sickness and understaffing.

Operating staff involved in the dispute took strike action over the same issue in June. Strikers at all four hospitals held a march and protest outside Salford Royal Hospital on Wednesday, followed by a rally.

**Hospital estate staff at London hospital trust walk out to demand pay parity**

Estate workers employed as decorators, electricians, joiners, painters and plumbers at several hospitals run by the South London and Maudsley (SLAM) trust walked out Tuesday afternoon. The action is due to run until midnight Sunday.

The Unite union members are protesting pay disparity. Some of the workers are paid on band 4 or band 3 while doing the same work as those on the higher band 5. They held previous stoppages in July and early August over this issue.

A further week-long stoppage is scheduled to begin the afternoon of September 1. The strikes include a ban on on-call work.

**Holiday camp safety officers at Butlin's in Bognor Regis, UK set to strike over pay and safety concerns**

Resort Safety Officers employed at the Butlin's holiday camp in Bognor Regis on the English south coast are set to walk out from Friday. They are employed to deal with incidents across the holiday camp site. This includes responding to violent incidents, aggressive behaviour, lost children and medical emergencies.

The United Voices of the World union (UVW) members voted unanimously for the stoppages. Their demands include additional staffing, replacement of faulty equipment, a pay rise to £14 per hour, repayment of alleged unlawful pay deductions and recognition of the union.

Planned stoppage dates are Friday to Sunday, followed by September 4-7, September 10-15, then a continuous strike from September 21. Butlins recorded a profit of over £28 million for 2024.

**Bus workers in Wallonia, Belgium strike over "ecocheque" agreement**

Bus workers on the LETEC transport network in Belgium's French-speaking Wallonia region began a 48-hour strike on August 27.

Strike notice was filed after regional conciliation broke down earlier this month. A meeting with management on Tuesday failed to resolve the issues.

The negotiations concerned an annual "ecocheque" of 100 euros guaranteed to all LETEC workers under a five-year agreement. The payment is an untaxed bonus available for purchase of specific services and products.

That agreement ended last December. The Transport Operator of Wallonia (OTW), LETEC's administrator, argues that as the federal government intended to end the benefit, there was no need to discuss it.

As the official federal budget measures did not include its abolition, the CGSP Tram-Bus-Métro union centre asked for its continuation in 2026. Serge Delchambre of the CGSP accused management of coming up with "many different pretexts" for not paying it.

He accused management of offering to reinstate the ecocheque in exchange for scrapping "heat hours." If the temperature exceeds 27°C at the monitoring point in Uccle, drivers can obtain an hour's compensation. These are cumulative and can be transferred into leave.

Management denied Tuesday's meeting was about saving the ecocheque. Marketing director Stéphane Thiery said it was about the savings plan imposed on LETEC by the regional government.

The OTW and Walloon Minister of Transport François Desquesnes last June demanded LETEC make €20 million of savings by 2029.

The unions know workers are under pressure, telling the press "Taxes are rising… one hundred euros is a hundred euros. A bus driver does not earn 4,000 euros per month." They have agreed to meet management again on September 10 to discuss the cuts.

**Electrical factory workers in Serbia dismissed for striking over unpaid wages**

27 workers at the Elid factory in Donji Dušnik, near Gadžin Han, Serbia have been dismissed after striking over unpaid wages.

The workers, who make electrical products, say that over the last three years their salaries have been delayed by up to four months. This year, worker Zvonko Petkovi? told the press they were paid only 30,000 dinars (less than $300) from January to June 15: "The owner constantly delayed our salary payments, saying the company was operating at a loss, while we were working normally and the products were going to customers."

They halted production for two days. Factory owner Slaviša Mili? signed a proposal that workers would receive wages for January to the middle of March that month, with arrears up to the end of May due by July 20.

The proposal also pledged regular future payments, agreeing that if wages were delayed, production would be suspended.

When the promised arrears were not paid, the workers went on strike again in July. Mili? threatened dismissal, allegedly claiming workers were legally required to work without money. Petkovi? said Mili? made an offer saying they needed to work three months without wages if they wanted to receive their arrears. They refused, began legal proceedings and initiated debt collection.

Mili?, who claims to have settled salaries up till April through the sale of property in Novi Sad, issued dismissal notices claiming the workers had "violated work discipline." The workers refuse to accept these notices, which would make them ineligible for severance pay or compensation from the National Employment Service.

The workers, 15 of whom are approaching retirement having spent their entire working lives at Elid, are fighting for payment of back wages, severance pay and a termination decision that would allow them to register with a work bureau.

Elid was founded in 1963 and was one of southern Serbia's most successful factories in the 1970s and 1980s. It declined after privatisation in 2004 and was bought by Mili?'s Elektroplamen company in 2015. Since then, said Petkovi?, most of its workers had been on minimum wage.

**Technology workers in Thuringia, Germany strike against plant closure**

A strike by workers at the Wilchwitz, Thuringia plant of technology supplier Kelvion is now into its fourth week. The 300 workers oppose closure of the plant, which produces plate heat exchangers, and relocation of production to the company's headquarters in Sarstedt, Lower Saxony.

The IG Metall union accuses the company of attempted "profit maximisation" since it was taken over by US investor Apollo last year. The union held six warning strikes to keep things under control, but on 1 August the workers voted 100 percent for indefinite all-out strike.

It has been reported that Kelvion has attempted to use previously employed temporary workers as a strikebreaking force. Thermowave GmbH has expressed an interest in taking over the plant, but with no guarantees for the whole workforce.

IG Metall's "social plan" is directed at regulating workers' anger while offering commercial advice to Kelvion. The union has argued that any savings the company makes by relocation will be counteracted by the higher wages paid to workers moving to Sarstedt.

The strikers, meanwhile, have begun reaching out to their colleagues at other sites.

**Strike against racism by migrant-owned shops in Magdeburg, Germany**

Upwards of 120 shops owned by migrants closed in Magdeburg for five hours Wednesday. The half-day shutdown is protesting xenophobia ahead of the September 6, state election in Saxony-Anhalt. The far-right Alternative for Germany, which calls for strict migration controls and an end to health care and general labour migration, is ahead in the polls.

Saaeeid Saaeeid of the Refugee Council Saxony-Anhalt told *taz*, "We are on strike to send a clear signal against racism and exclusion… Many are extremely afraid they could be stripped of their right to stay, that they will lose their rights, that they are no longer physically safe."

Saaeeid said some shopowners had decided to strike despite the economic hardship it would cause them. Others faced threats from their landlords and the possibility of increased racist provocations. He said: "Do not let yourselves be divided into foreigners and Germans, society must stay together."

**57-day strike by Paris humanitarian emergency service workers ends**

Workers at SAMU Social in Paris have ended a 57-day strike over pay and social provision.

SAMU (Service d'Aide Mobile d'Urgence) Social is a municipal humanitarian emergency service active in various French cities, providing care and medical support to homeless people via mobile units. The strike in Paris reflects a wider social crisis.

On June 23, workers began a strike which severely impacted the work of the organisation's emergency 115 phone number during the heatwave. It protested the forced return to the streets of families from emergency housing since the government's Cold Plan in December 2025.

SAMU Social director Vanessa Benoît said the organisation was at its budget limits because of these requirements and was having to turn away priority cases because places were already occupied. She said the government had asked them "to re-examine these situations."

A camp outside the site had drawn up to 450 people seeking accommodation during the strike. Many had rejected offers of temporary accommodation in the provinces because they were already involved in administrative processes in the capital or their children were already at school there.

The SAMU Social telephone workers were also calling for increased pay to cover the additional workloads.

The CGT union called off the strike after nearly two months, saying workers were now directly involved in the work of 115. A 150-euro bonus for additional work, tied to the Cold Plan, will now be paid to 115 telephone workers. The CGT says that management has also agreed to push for salary increases at the next board meeting.

**Wildcat walkout by portering staff at Israel's Ben Gurion airport over staff shortages**

Baggage handling staff at Ben Gurion airport, Israel held a two-hour walkout on Thursday August 20 over claims of understaffing. On a busy day, with over 100,000 passengers and 600 flights, airport management temporarily closed the airport, including check-in facilities.

The stoppage began when around 15 baggage handlers walked out after their nine-hour shift and refused to do overtime.

The Airports Authority Workers' Committee said there is a current shortage of around 450 employees at the airport, exacerbated by around 100 of the workforce on military reserve duty. Workers say the understaffing, 12-hour shifts and high temperatures have led to exhaustion.

**Ongoing protests in Iran against dire economic conditions**

August 18 saw protests by steel and ironworks retirees in Isfahan. Among their demands were free healthcare and for pensions to be increased in line with the actual cost-of-living.

Various groups of retirees gathered in Kermanshah on Saturday, calling for improved pensions and against deteriorating living conditions.

Decades of US sanctions have devastated the Iranian economy. The US blockade of ships in and out of Iran along with military attacks have exacerbated the crisis.

**National strike by sugar workers in South Africa over pay**

Workers at Tongaat Hulett's South African operations joined thousands of sugar industry workers in a nationwide stoppage August 17, demanding a 13 percent wage increase. The employers have offered only 5.4 percent.

The workers are also demanding a R1,000 transport allowance and R1,500 housing allowance. Around 6,000 workers at 12 sugar mills in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga are participating in the protected strike, represented mainly by the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU), the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) and UASA.

At Tongaat Hulett, production was largely brought to a standstill, with only essential workers on the premises. The dispute follows wage negotiations that began in February and subsequently broke down. Unions reduced their demand during mediation but returned to the 13 percent claim after employers rejected a proposed settlement and reverted to their 5.4 percent offer.

The strike comes only weeks after Tongaat Hulett narrowly avoided liquidation through increased financing from the Industrial Development Corporation, which raised its support from R2.3 billion to R2.5 billion. Workers are confronting an industry already under pressure from cheap sugar imports and financial difficulties but are refusing to accept that the crisis should be imposed on their living standards.

**Students at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa continue protests over rising cost of higher education**

Thousands of Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) students in South Africa are continuing their protests begun August 7 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.

The conflict intensified with mass meetings and a march to parliament August 17, and the Old Education Building at Belville was reportedly set alight. The building houses the School of Emergency Medical Care, and the university estimates preliminary damage at around R1.5 million.

University management responded by disrupting students' access to accommodation and shutting all campuses, 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.

**Kenyan nurses continue strike, defying court orders**

Nurses across Kenya are continuing their nationwide strike, begun on July 29, in defiance of court orders directing them to return to work. The Kenya National Union of Nurses and Midwives (KNUNM) members say they will remain out until longstanding agreements are implemented, including the 2017 Return-to-Work Formula and the stalled 2025-2029 collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Other health workers' agreements arising from the 2017 disputes were honoured.

On August 22, KNUNM gave the Salaries and Remuneration Commission seven days to approve outstanding CBAs and issue the required letters of no objection, threatening to extend the stoppage to national referral hospitals if it refuses. The CBA covers salaries, allowances, terms of service and other employment benefits.

The dispute also involves more than 7,600 Universal Health Coverage workers whose contracts expired June 30 and whom the union wants absorbed on permanent and pensionable terms.

**Namibian fishermen employed by Marco Fishing locked out after voting to strike**

Around 300 workers at Marco Fishing in Lüderitz, Namibia, have been locked out without pay since July 24 after wage negotiations broke down and workers voted to strike.

The Namibia Food and Allied Workers Union (NAFAU) members are demanding a one-year agreement providing an increase to N$1,100, and a rate of N$27 an hour for land-based workers, plus improved housing and transport allowances.

NAFAU initially demanded a N$2,000 rise for seagoing workers, whose basic salary is only around N$4,000 a month. Marco Fishing instead proposed increases of 4.5 percent in the first year, followed by 5 percent in each of the next two years. The union says the company refused to make temporary employees permanent. Some have worked for Marco for more than five years.

Union officials accuse management of attempting to deprive workers of wages before the lucrative November-December fishing season so they will be forced to accept its offer.

**Tunisian protestors oppose drinking water shortages and power cuts during extreme heat**

Hundreds demonstrated in the capital of Tunisia, Tunis, on August 20 against prolonged drinking-water shortages, electricity cuts and deteriorating living conditions. They demanded the resignation of President Kais Saied.

Protesters carried placards complaining of "thirst" and "darkness," and called for the release of political prisoners. The Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights said hundreds of protests have taken place across the country in recent weeks, mainly over water shortages and power outages.

The shortages intensified during weeks of extreme heat, with temperatures reaching around 50°C in parts of Tunisia in July. Electricity consumption hit a record 6,000 megawatts on July 21, prompting the state utility STEG to impose rotating cuts across large parts of the country. These disrupted water pumping stations, while the independent Tunisian Water Observatory recorded 608 reports of water-supply disruption during July.

Protests over the crisis already took place in Nabeul and other regions. Some residents report going days without running water. The UGTT trade union federation called for an emergency plan for the water and electricity sectors, blaming years of structural problems and mismanagement. The President summoned utility chiefs on July 22, declaring outages lasting more than 24 hours "unacceptable," but widespread interruptions continued, fuelling broader opposition to his government.

**Nigerian parents hold protest over kidnapped children**

Parents and relatives of abducted children protested in Uba, Borno State, Nigeria on August 20, demanding that the federal government secure their release.

Around 45 children remain missing after being abducted from classrooms on May 15 in Mussa, a community bordering the Sambisa Forest, an area long associated with Boko Haram and other such groups.

The demonstration reflects mounting anger over the failure of the Nigerian authorities to protect civilians. The May kidnapping was followed on June 29 by another mass abduction in nearby Lassa, where 36 students and a teacher remain captive. Families say they have received no information about the condition or whereabouts of their children.

Parents describe living in constant anxiety. The protest takes place amid the continuing epidemic of kidnappings and armed attacks across Nigeria, despite repeated government pledges to restore security.