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.

Seasonal firefighters march in Athens, Greece for permanent jobs as dangerous wildfires continue countrywide

Hundreds of seasonal forest firefighters from across Greece demonstrated in Athens on Monday, demanding year-round employment and permanent positions in the Fire Service. The rally--supported by the Hellenic Firefighters Federation (OPYE) and the Special Forestry Operations Unit--gathered outside Parliament before marching to the office of Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

The workers are currently employed for only eight months of the year, despite being deployed on the front line of Greece's increasingly severe wildfire emergencies. They are demanding 12-month contracts, arguing that their accumulated experience and training are required throughout the year, not only during the summer fire season.

A central grievance is a recent recruitment regulation imposing a maximum age of 30 for permanent fire service posts, effectively excluding the most experienced firefighters. Of approximately 2,500 seasonal firefighters currently serving, workers say around 2,000 would be excluded from applying because of the age restriction and demand its abolition.

The protesters also demand the reinstatement of around 600 seasonal firefighters who have been left without positions. They carried banners and chanted "Put an end to this farce," condemning a system that repeatedly relies on experienced firefighters during the most dangerous months before leaving them without work.

The demonstration comes amid a particularly deadly wildfire season in which five firefighters were killed. Homes and thousands of hectares of forest have been destroyed. The continuing demands for permanent employment bring into sharp relief the contradiction between the government's dependence on seasonal labour during increasingly dangerous fire seasons and its austerity-based refusal to provide workers with stable, year-round employment.

Firefighters continue to confront major fires across the country. On Thursday, Greater Athens and the surrounding area, including eastern Aegean islands Lesvos, Chios and Samos, were raised to level 4 wildfire risk under Greece's 5-point categorising.

The day before, nearly 30 water-bombing aircraft and more than 150 firefighters had tackled blazes east and northwest of the capital and the island of Evia, while villages had been evacuated.

Low paid office workers in Romania's business and finance sector demonstrate for pay increase and job security

Hundreds of workers in commerce, IT and communications, finance, insurance and banking protested outside the Ministry of Labour in Bucharest, Romania August 25 to demand an end to the blocking of collective bargaining in the private sector.

The members of several trade union federations in business, IT and finance accuse major companies and employers' organisations of obstructing negotiations by refusing to participate, delaying talks or withdrawing from representative employers' associations.

Workers also oppose the imposition of extensive restructuring and redundancies and demand an increase in the national minimum wage from January 1, warning that rising prices and taxes are eroding workers' purchasing power. They say around 60 percent of the 800,000 workers in the sector earn the minimum wage or close to it.

Walkout by staff at London's Victoria and Albert Museum over pay and working conditions

Staff working for the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum at three of its London sites are set to walk out on Friday and Saturday. The sites affected are the East Storehouse, East Museum and the Young V&A.

Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union and Prospect union members are seeking increased pay and improved working conditions. PCS members voted by over 95 percent majority for the action and are demanding the V&A make an agreeable pay offer or agree to become a Real Living Wage accredited employer. They also demand action on health and safety including suitable seating arrangements, access to drinking water and heat mitigating measurers such as screening off areas where the temperature reaches 30 degrees Celsius.

PCS members at all V&A sites including South Kensington will also begin indefinite action short of striking (ASOS) from September 4. ASOS will include a ban on overtime, withdrawal of cooperation and a work to rule.

The V&A workers held a pre-strike demonstration on Wednesday. The news website *Artnet* recently noted that, "Union membership is rising among culture workers after years of stagnating wages."

Haulage firm workers at West Yorkshire company in England begin all-out stoppage over pay

Around 40 workers employed as forklift truck drivers and machine

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operators at the UK Knottingley and South Kirby sites of Lockwood Haulage began an all-out indefinite stoppage Wednesday.

They work in the company's glass division providing glass bottles for its customer Ardagh Glass, which supplies glass containers for Coca Cola, Heineken and Stella.

The Unite union members are protesting a 1 percent pay offer backdated to March 1, 2025. They oppose Lockwood's proposal of an attendance-based quarterly bonus of £250 rather than pay increases. Many workers fear this would leave them out-of-pocket. The workers have not had a pay rise since October 2023.

The workers were previously employed by logistics firm GXO before being transferred under a TUPE agreement (protecting their existing terms and conditions) in March 2025. Lockwood initially refused to recognise Unite, but granted it recognition following strike action by the workers in July 2025.

University press finance staff in Oxford, England strike over outsourcing

Around 30 finance workers employed by Oxford University Press (OUP) in Oxford, England went on strike Tuesday. The stoppage is due to last until September 11.

The Unite union members are protesting OUP's plans to offshore its finance services to EXL Services, based in India, with the loss of around 50 jobs.

In November, OUP announced proposals to make 113 redundancies in the UK. The company recently acquired Swiss publisher Karger, making 76 redundancies in the process. OUP is the world's largest university press. It made over £47 million in profits for the year 2025/26 with reserves of over £329 million.

Further protests in Iraq over demands for public sector jobs

Baghdad and other Iraqi provinces are seeing an increasing number of protests, with around three or four regularly taking place each week. The main demands are for public sector jobs, secure tenure for those on contracts and improved professional rights.

For many Iraqis, public sector employment is the only hope of obtaining a stable income. Around 4.2 million Iraqis are employed in the public sector, with an additional three million retirees dependent on the state for their income.

Jobs protests by youth in Iran as conditions worsen

Young job seekers in the Iranian city of Gachsaran clashed with security forces on Monday. An Iranian human rights group issued a video appearing to show police firing at the protesters, with one person being injured. They were protesting employment practices at a refinery being constructed in the city.

According to frustrated protesters, jobs are going to those with political connections. They demand greater transparency over the allocation of jobs and for local qualified workers to be taken on.

Similar protests of young people also took place in Ahvaz, also in southwestern Iran. Here they were protesting hiring practices at the Dahbal Khazaei Sugarcane Agro-Industry Company. They demand posts be offered to qualified workers locally and disclosure of how posts are advertised. Security forces broke up the protest.

Iran's economy has been devastated by decades of US sanctions. The economic crisis has been exacerbated by the US blockade of shipping into and out of the country, along with the effects of resumed military attacks.

Strike by teachers in East Jerusalem over entry permits and curriculum change

As the academic year began on Tuesday, teachers in Christian and private schools in East Jerusalem declared an open-ended stoppage. They were protesting the restriction of permits for teachers from the occupied West Bank enabling entry to East Jerusalem. Around 40 percent requests for permits were refused.

The teachers were also protesting the increased enforcing of an Israeli curriculum in the teaching programme.

Kenyan nurses continue national strike over pay and conditions

Nurses in Kenya are continuing their nationwide strike begun July 29 over pay, conditions and unimplemented agreements, disrupting services at public hospitals across the country.

The Kenya National Union of Nurses and Midwives (KNUNM) demand implementation of the return-to-work agreement reached after their 2017 strike, the 2025–29 collective bargaining agreement, adoption of career progression guidelines, and permanent and pensionable employment for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) workers. UHC workers provide healthcare to all who cannot otherwise pay. Nurses also complained of stalled promotions, unpaid arrears and insecure employment.

The Council of Governors claimed the 2017 agreement was signed "under duress" and is financially unsustainable. The strike has severely disrupted county health services. Patients, including pregnant women, are being forced to seek alternative treatment or go without care.

Kenyan aviation workers on go-slow over poor working conditions

A go-slow by aviation workers at Kenya's main international airport, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi, entered its second day Monday, disrupting flights and leaving thousands of passengers stranded or facing lengthy delays. Kenya Airways said its flights were departing around two hours late on average, while RwandAir cancelled two flights because of air traffic control problems. Some passengers reported waiting for up to 12 hours.

Kenya Aviation Workers Union members are protesting poor working conditions and a series of unresolved grievances, including the failure to conclude a collective bargaining agreement with the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority. The union also accused the Kenya Airports Authority of failing to support workers, and opposes plans to use youth volunteers as airport staff.

Negotiations are due to resume Monday, while the action continues. The dispute is the latest in a series of actions by Kenyan aviation workers over

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working conditions and unresolved employment issues at JKIA, one of East Africa's main international transport hubs.

Moroccan lawyers continue nationwide strike to defend independence of judiciary

Lawyers across Morocco are continuing a nationwide strike against a new law regulating the legal profession, despite its passage by parliament. The Association of Moroccan Bar Associations members have suspended professional services since June 15, disrupting court proceedings across the country.

The lawyers say the legislation, promoted by Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi, threatens the independence and organisational autonomy of the profession. The reforms cover lawyers' training, financial management and internal governance.

Lawyers previously held intermittent strikes and a national protest in February. The government subsequently established a joint commission to discuss the reforms, but the dispute intensified after a parliamentary committee approved the legislation in May and parliament later passed it. The Association of Moroccan Bar Associations is due to decide the next stage of its campaign at a September 10 meeting.

Nigerian lecturers hold two-week strike over pay and conditions

Lecturers at Kaduna State University (KASU), Nigeria began a two-week warning strike August 28 over unresolved pay and employment issues. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) members voted for the action after a two-week ultimatum issued to the Kaduna State government on August 12 expired without agreement.

The lecturers rejected the state government's offer of N300 million for earned academic allowances, saying it failed to address their wider demands. These include implementation of an agreed 25–35 percent salary increase, payment of promotion arrears and greater university autonomy.

The KASU action forms part of a widening wave of disputes at Nigerian public universities. ASUU authorised 20 branches to begin strike procedures over the slow implementation of the 2025 federal government/ASUU agreement. Lecturers at Plateau State University, Bokkos, meanwhile began an indefinite strike over six unresolved demands, including 22 months of arrears from the 25 and 35 percent pay rise, implementation of a contributory pension scheme and improved security for staff.

Workers at fruit wholesaler in South Africa walk out over pay and conditions

More than 250 workers at fruit wholesaler Betko Fresh Produce in Villiersdorp, South Africa walked out August 24 demanding a 10 percent wage increase, changes to their provident fund, bonuses and greater job security.

The National Union for All Sectors (NUFAS) negotiating wages and conditions is a minority union at the company, with a membership of around 28 percent of the workforce. Workers demand the right to be represented by NUFAS.

The strike was called off on Thursday by NUFAS after management threatened a lockout. The company agreed to terminate its provident fund contract and introduce a long-service award system, while NUFAS said workers with long service would receive additional paid leave and that provident contributions would be refunded. Management, however, did not confirm these details but withdrew the lockout.

An existing 5 percent wage increase from September 2025 remains in place. NUFAS says it will return with demands for a 10 percent increase and guaranteed bonuses in the next financial year.

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

Around 100 students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) in South Africa marched to the offices of the Special Investigating Unit in Pinelands on Tuesday, demanding an independent investigation into alleged financial mismanagement and corruption at the university.

The action follows weeks of protests over CPUT's proposed 2027 Financial Recovery Plan, which would have placed additional financial burdens on students, including upfront registration payments of up to R7,000.

Students accused the university of financial mismanagement, poor maintenance and failing to account for the financial crisis confronting the institution.

The protests forced CPUT's council to withdraw the financial recovery plan. Students are nevertheless demanding the allegations surrounding the university's finances are independently investigated.

The confrontation disrupted the academic year, with lectures remaining suspended and residences being evacuated following protests across campuses. Talks between student representatives and management brokered by the Higher Education Department stalled, with students demanding a more transparent negotiating structure that includes representatives from all four campuses as witnesses.

Students are also protesting injuries suffered during the protests, while expressing concern that the prolonged shutdown could jeopardise the academic year. The struggle at CPUT reflects the growing pressure on students facing financial insecurity and deteriorating university conditions.

Workers at food plant in South Africa stage picket to defend jobs

Workers at Premier Foods' Fruit Products Western Cape plant in Tulbagh, South Africa face the closure of the factory after consultations between the company and union broke down.

Workers picketed outside the plant on August 26, warning that losing their jobs would threaten not only their livelihoods but also their access to basic services. Many services, including unemployment offices, banking and medical centres, are located around 30 kilometres away in Ceres, creating additional costs for the unemployed.

Around 245 permanent workers, 179 fixed-term contractors and approximately 3,000 seasonal workers would lose their jobs. Seasonal employees could be excluded from severance packages.

Anele Gabela, who has worked at the plant for seven years and supports a household of five, told the press of the experience of his parents. They

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worked at the factory for more than 35 years but remained contract workers and received only R5,000 each when they stopped working.

The Agricultural Food and Allied Democratic Workers Union declared that Premier Foods acquired the plant from Rhodes Food Group in March to reduce competition, before declaring the operation economically unviable.

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