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.

Over 100,000 public sector workers in the Republic of Ireland take industrial action in pay dispute

On Wednesday, more than 100,000 public sector workers in the Republic of Ireland began industrial action in a dispute over pay, after the previous public service pay agreement expired at the end of June without a replacement.

The Fórsa union members in local authorities began working strictly to contract, with council staff across the country withdrawing cooperation with additional duties. Health workers in Fórsa, SIPTU and the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation also began work-to-rule action. Staff are carrying out their rostered duties but refusing voluntary overtime, additional unpaid work, cover for colleagues and other work outside their contracts.

Education workers also joined the dispute, although the principal teachers' actions begin later. Irish National Teachers' Organisation and Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland members are due to begin a work-to-rule on October 5 and participate in the planned nationwide strike on October 14 by public sector workers.

The failure of the government and trade unions to agree a new multi-year public-sector pay framework follows an inadequate previous agreement, which delivered 9.6 percent over 30 months and did little to offset rising living costs. Workers opposition is being fuelled by Ireland's exceptionally high housing and living costs, growing inequality and deteriorating public-sector conditions, reflected in overwhelming strike ballots across the unions. The Fianna Fáil–Fine Gael government, is resisting a major settlement demanding fiscal sustainability, leaving the unions under pressure to contain mounting anger through limited industrial action rather a broader mobilisation of the working class against austerity. See WSWS article "Huge public sector strikes in Ireland"

Italian port workers in 24-hour strike for improved employment and pension rights

On Monday, Port workers across Italy held a 24-hour national strike and disrupted operations at several major ports, including Genoa, Livorno, Trieste, Ancona, Civitavecchia and Monfalcone.

The USB Mare e Porti union members demand port work is officially classified as "arduous" to allow workers, many of whom are over 50, to qualify for earlier retirement provisions. The union cites hazardous conditions, such as working in ship holds reaching 50°C.

They also oppose a parliamentary amendment that would allow terminal operators to hire temporary workers directly through agencies, bypassing the Article 17 system of the 1994 Port Law, which ensures the employment of specialised, experienced dockworkers.

Tens of thousands of public education workers, parents and students demonstrate in Madrid, Spain for improvements in public education

On Sunday, over 20,000 teachers, students, families and education workers marched through Madrid, Spain in defence of public education. The demonstration took place under the slogan, "Save Public Education" and was held ahead of an indefinite strike due to begin on October 14.

The teachers and other education workers demand reductions in teaching hours and class sizes, higher salaries, less bureaucratic work and improvements to school infrastructure and vocational education

The march subsequently converged with the tenants' housing protest camp in Madrid's Puerta del Sol, part of Saturday's, "Not one more Maricarmen" demonstration against evictions and soaring rents. See WSWS Perspective " The eviction of Maricarmen in Spain and the global housing crisis"

Further strike by UK Foreign Office civil servants over proposed job cuts

Civil servants working for the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) held a one-day strike Monday, with pickets outside offices in King Charles Street, London, and Abercrombie House, East Kilbride. Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) voted overwhelmingly in June for industrial action against plans to reduce FCDO staffing by 15–25 percent by 2030. The House of Commons Library says the restructuring could result in up to 2,000 redundancies. The FCDO describes its programme as creating a "smaller, more modern and more effective department."

PCS members have already staged several days of strikes in July and August and maintained continuous action short of a strike since July 31. The union says the FCDO has refused to provide key information on staffing levels, vacancies and the number of employees currently at risk. The dispute therefore concerns not only the destruction of jobs but the lack of transparency surrounding a major restructuring of the department.

PCS General Secretary Fran Heathcote has accused the FCDO of refusing to "engage meaningfully" rather than a fight against the jobs cull members are fighting to wage. The PCS is curtailing this through

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intermittent strike action and action short of a strike, while the government proceeds with its cuts programme.

Academic staff at Nottingham University, UK strike over job and course cuts

University of Nottingham UCU members struck on 30 September and 1 October as the university's Council considered Future Nottingham Phase 2 (FN2), the latest stage of its restructuring programme. The two-day stoppage is followed by continuous strike action from 5 October to 11 December. In the April ballot, 64 percent voted and 76 percent backed strike action.

FN2 involves the removal of 609 full-time-equivalent posts over three years, with around 700 job losses subsequently approved by management, predominantly among academic staff. This is on top of the 350 staff already made redundant in the first phase. Recruitment has been suspended on 42 degree programmes, with the plans threatening the closure of American and Canadian Studies, Modern Languages and Music. UCU members oppose the cuts, but the union leadership has restricted the dispute to securing a commitment against compulsory redundancies.

Other universities across the UK are facing major disputes over hundreds of job cuts, multi-million-pound budget reductions and cuts to course provision. These include Edinburgh, Dundee, Heriot-Watt, Glasgow Caledonian, Essex, Exeter, Sussex and Goldsmiths in London.

These disputes expose a wider crisis in higher education. The UCU is confining these battles to separate university disputes, rather than coordinating them into a unified challenge to the chronic underfunding and continued marketisation of higher education under the Labour government.

UK staff working for Nottingham tram network strike over pay

Around 200 staff working on Nottingham's tram network in England took strike action on September 26 and 27 in a dispute over pay. Those taking action included drivers, ticket-office staff and maintenance workers.

GMB members are seeking a 4.1 percent pay increase after negotiations with Nottingham Express Transit (NET) began in January. NET made a final offer on June 19 of 3.3 percent increase, rising to 7 percent for the lowest-paid roles.

Workers voted by 88 percent to back strike action. Further strikes are scheduled for Friday October 2 and Saturday October 3. Between the two periods of strike action, from September 28 to October 1, workers are taking action short of a strike by potentially refusing or cancelling overtime.

The action coincides with Nottingham's annual Goose Fair. However, GMB says the timing was coincidental: the union says NET challenged an earlier strike ballot, delaying the industrial action until the Goose Fair weekend.

Traffic enforcement officers in London Borough of Camden walk out over pay

This week, around 100 traffic wardens working in the London Borough of Camden began an eight-week stoppage over pay. They are employed by contractor NSL, part of Marston Holdings.

The Unison union members are calling for a £2 an hour pay increase. They currently earn around £16.50 an hour for a 42-hour week. Last time they walked out, in 2023, the council lost around £1.5 million in lost tickets and unprocessed fines.

NSL reported profits of over £11 million after tax last year.

Hospital porters at Reading hospital in England strike over pay cut

Around 100 hospital porters at Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust at its Reading hospital in England began a 48-hour strike Tuesday.

The GMB members are protesting a cut in the overtime rate. Previously, overtime rates were paid at a higher than normal rate, but the Trust has now moved extra porter shifts onto an online pool bank, meaning overtime will be at a lower rate.

Five days of protests in Iraqi capital over jobs and social conditions

Sunday marked the beginning of five days of protests in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. University students gathered outside the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, calling to end the raising of admission thresholds for public and private universities.

That day, members of the "Dawn Iraq" group of engineers gathered outside the Finance Ministry demanding government jobs. Meanwhile, water workers on compulsory leave protested outside the Ministry of Water Resources demanding reinstatement.

Monday, Karkh Central Prison staff held a protest outside the Justice Ministry over delays in disbursement of a grant to which they are entitled.

On Tuesday, Interior Ministry applicants gathered outside the Finance Ministry demanding post appointments. The same day also saw graduates and post-graduate students marching to demand government jobs.

Wednesday families of prisoners and missing persons were due to hold a demonstration demanding an amnesty.

On Thursday, protests of Dhi Qar engineering graduates were scheduled outside Finance Ministry and Oil Ministry offices, also demanding jobs.

Tunisian fuel transport workers hold 48-hour strike to win improved pay and conditions

Fuel transport workers across Tunisia staged a 48-hour strike from September 23. They are demanding wage increases, improved working conditions, payment of allowances agreed as far back as 2019 and settlement of outstanding social security contributions.

The action, called by the UGTT-affiliated General Federation of Oil and Chemicals, affected companies responsible for distributing fuel throughout the country and led motorists to queue at petrol stations.

The stoppage threatened major disruption because Tunisia relies overwhelmingly on road tankers to distribute fuel. Workers accuse the employers of failing to honour previous agreements, while declining real wages and rising prices have intensified pressure on working-class households.

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The fuel workers' strike took place amid recurring electricity and water cuts, shortages of medicines and growing dissatisfaction over deteriorating public services. The stoppage coincides with escalating protests over prices, shortages and falling purchasing power.

Ghanaian teachers walk out over arrears and lack of promotions

Teachers across Ghana continued an indefinite nationwide strike begun September 25 over pay and promotions.

The Ghana National Association of Teachers, National Association of Graduate Teachers and Pre-Tertiary Teachers Association of Ghana members' stoppage disrupted teaching nationwide.

Teachers demand payment of promotion-related salary arrears, automatic placement of promoted teachers on the correct salary scales, conclusion of negotiations on a new collective agreement after the previous agreement expired in June, and implementation of a 20 percent allowance for teachers working in deprived and hard-to-reach areas.

Government figures indicate that only 6,079 of an expected 58,620 promotion cases have been processed for payment.

Talks with Education Minister Haruna Iddrisu on September 28 failed to end the strike, which remained in force on September 30. The government has appealed for teachers to return while negotiations continue, saying the deprived-area allowance could be introduced from January 2027. Unions have rejected further assurances, insisting outstanding increases and arrears must appear on payslips and be paid into teachers' bank accounts.

More than 2,000 teachers in the Dormaa district alone were reported to be observing the stoppage.

Security guards at Eskom South Africa employed by contractor on indefinite strike over unpaid wages

Security guards employed by Eskom contractor Mjayeli Security Services in South Africa's Northern Cape walked out indefinitely September 21 over unpaid wages, with workers picketing at Eskom offices in Kimberley and Kathu.

The 268 National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) members say they have stopped work on a "no pay, no work" basis, citing overdue rent, lapsed insurance and difficulties paying for basic necessities and funerals. They rejected an offer to pay 30 percent of September salaries.

The dispute left Eskom sites without normal security protection, with guards warning that access controls, searches and patrols were suspended. Numsa local organiser Lerato Mohatlane said workers could not guarantee the safety of Eskom employees or prevent theft of equipment, laptops and mobile phones. He also warned that the absence of patrols since September 21 exposed cables, distribution networks, transmission infrastructure and substations to vandalism and theft, potentially contributing to electricity supply disruptions.

The strike highlights the vulnerability of essential public infrastructure when security workers employed through private contractors are left without wages. Numsa said action would escalate if salaries were not paid by September 25.

Nigerians in Delta protest over lack of payments by oil companies

More than 100 oil-producing communities from six states in Nigeria's Niger Delta protested outside the headquarters of Renaissance Africa Energy in Port Harcourt on September 24 over alleged unpaid land entitlements. The demonstrators, from Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Imo, Akwa Ibom and Abia states, are demanding around N87 billion in outstanding ground rents dating from 2014 to 2023.

The communities also demand ground-rent payments are standardised at N600,000 per hectare. Community representative Chief Ayiba Job said some oil-producing areas had received only N200,000 per hectare while Bonny, Forcados and the former Shell residential area received N600,000.

Protesters said a 2019 Nigerian Senate resolution backed the harmonisation of payments, but the dispute remained unresolved following Shell's divestment of its onshore operations to Renaissance.

Renaissance rejected claims that it had failed to meet its contractual obligations. The protestors called on the federal government to intervene, insisting that Shell's divestment should not extinguish claims for the decade of alleged arrears.

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