

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

8 October 2026

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

Students in Belgium protest cuts and deteriorating conditions in education

In Belgium, a movement of secondary-school students began October 1 in Liège. It quickly spread to Charleroi and across Wallonia, with further school blockades and demonstrations reported from October 2 onwards.

Liège Mayor Willy Demeyer banned gatherings of more than three people from October 1. By October 6, police in Liège had arrested 107 people since October 1, including 53 that day. On Monday this week, 25 minors were arrested in Charleroi.

The students are protesting reforms adopted by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, including a €500 million education spending reduction by 2029, higher university fees and an increase from 20 to 22 in weekly classroom hours for teachers in the last three years of secondary school, in force since the start of the school year. They demand fully funded, accessible public education and have also expressed solidarity with teachers whose working conditions are being worsened.

Student representatives rejected claims that the movement merely imitates the protests in France, saying it stems from cuts, rising fees and deteriorating conditions in their own education system. The students are preparing a wider national mobilisation on October 9, amid growing opposition to austerity in education.

Italian workers in 24-hour strike over erosion of living standards

Workers in a range of sectors across Italy took part in a 24-hour multi-sector general strike October 2. The stoppage covered schools, healthcare, local authorities, metalworking, agriculture, maritime workers, private security and other public and private sector employees. Railway workers also stopped work for three hours, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., with regional services most affected.

Members of unions affiliated to the Confederazione Sindacale Lavoratori Europei (CSLE), and of the Fi-si union, demand reductions in the prices of fuel and basic necessities, lower taxation and wage increases sufficient to compensate for the rising cost of living.

The stoppage opened a month of further industrial action in Italy, with strikes planned across transport, education, the judiciary, fire services and other sectors. Group ATM workers in Milan are due to strike on October 9, and easyJet flight personnel will hold a national 24-hour strike on October 16. Further national action is scheduled for October 30, when the

Usi-Cit union has called for a general strike, excluding the main transport sectors, over increased military spending and arms production as well as economic demands.

Public sector and health workers in Portugal strike for improved pay and working conditions

On October 2, around 350,000 Portuguese central, regional and local public administration workers held a 24-hour stoppage. The action affected schools, social security offices, registry services, courts, councils and rubbish collection. In Lisbon, workers demonstrated and marched to the Finance Ministry, where negotiations over public sector pay are due to resume this week.

The members of three unions affiliated to the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers demand higher wages, improved working conditions and an upgrading of career structures.

Health workers also struck for 24 hours on the same day, affecting hospitals, local health centres and other services. The National Union of Workers in Services and Public-Interest Entities members demand restoration of points lost through the performance-assessment system, increased recruitment and an end to excessive reliance on overtime.

Cabin crew for easyJet in Portugal strike over poor working conditions

EasyJet cabin crew in Portugal began a five-day strike October 2, affecting operations from Lisbon, Porto and Faro airports. Around 443 flights were cancelled. The action coincided with a 24-hour public-sector strike and the October 5 Republic Day holiday, increasing disruption to travel across the country.

The National Union of Civil Aviation Flight Personnel members protest worsening working conditions, including constantly changing rosters, which leave workers uncertain about their duties from one day to the next, and the absence of pay progression based on length of service. They also say they are pressurised to work overtime because of staff shortages.

EasyJet undermined the action by bringing cabin crew from other European bases, including France, to operate flights in place of the striking workers. A further five-day stoppage is called for December 19–23, threatening major disruption during the Christmas travel period.

Strike by UK North Sea oil platform workers over pay cut and

conditions

Dozens of oil platform workers employed by Wood Group in the UK North Sea began a 48-hour strike on Tuesday, October 6, on five platforms operated by Harbour Energy. They are employed as electricians, production workers, instrument and mechanical technicians.

The Unite and Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members walked out in opposition to planned pay cuts, the imposition of worse conditions and the threat of “fire and rehire.”

Further 48-hour stoppages are planned for October 20 and November 3. Additionally, RMT members will impose an overtime ban from October 8.

Wood Group posted tax profits for 2024 of around \$3 million.

Airport workers at UK’s Leeds Bradford Airport set to walk out over pay

Around 130 workers—air traffic controllers, security staff, cleaners and customer service staff—at Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA), England, are set to begin a strike at 3 a.m. on Friday, October 16, ending at 6 a.m. on Sunday, October 18.

The four-year pay deal covering the Unite union members expired, and talks on a new contract have run since December 2025. The workers want pay in line with similar roles at other airports.

Spanish company AENA has a 51 percent share in LBA, which deals with over 4 million passengers a year. Its turnover for the year ending March 2025 was in excess of £61 million.

Drivers delivering NHS supplies in England to walk out over pay

Nearly 200 drivers employed by logistics company GXO are set to begin a three-day stoppage on October 13. The drivers, based at depots in Alfreton (Derbyshire), Bridgwater (Somerset), Normanton (West Yorkshire), Maidstone (Kent), Rugby (Warwickshire), Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk) and Washington (Tyne and Wear), work on GXO’s contract with Supply Chain Coordination Limited (SCCL), which supplies medical gowns, dressings and equipment to National Health Service (NHS) hospitals across England.

The Unite union members have rejected a 4 percent pay offer from GXO. GXO says SCCL, which is wholly owned by NHS England, has ruled out improving the offer.

Further strike dates are scheduled for October 20–22, 27–29 and November 3–5 and 10–12.

Hospital theatre assistants in Leeds, UK begin indefinite stoppage over pay grading dispute

Hospital theatre assistants working for the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in England began an indefinite stoppage on Wednesday. The trust runs the major St James’s University Hospital and the Leeds General Infirmary.

The Unison union members demand to be graded on Pay Band 3 rather

than the current lower Pay Band 2, with back pay for higher-level responsibilities. They argue that regular tasks they already perform, such as handling samples and supporting surgical teams, qualify for the higher band. Theatre assistants at other trusts have won regrading after taking or threatening action, in some cases with several years’ back pay—five at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust.

They have already carried out 40 days of stoppages in their ongoing dispute.

Lebanese public sector workers strike over transport allowances

Public administration employees in Lebanon held a two-day strike on September 30 and October 1, demanding higher transport allowances as fuel prices soar, MTV Lebanon reported. The union called for offices to stay closed on October 2, according to Daily Beirut.

Civil servants had already struck from September 23–25, *L’Orient Today* reported. The newspaper said the price of 20 litres of gasoline rose to \$32 on September 22, following the war between Iran and the United States, while annual inflation has passed 17 percent.

According to the newspaper, road transport unions and the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers had threatened a general strike for September 30. They suspended it on September 29 after the government agreed to pay public transport drivers a monthly lump sum of 12 million Lebanese lira from October 1 to December 31, and to raise family allowances by 40 percent for public transport drivers and for public and private sector employees. Transport federation head Bassam Tleiss claimed, “We suspended the strike because we got what we wanted.”

Nigerian education workers strike against privatisation and unpaid entitlements

Academic and non-academic workers at Lagos State-owned universities in Nigeria began an indefinite strike October 3 over unpaid arrears and the government’s failure to implement previously agreed pay and conditions.

The Joint Action Committee, which brings together four unions of lecturers, technologists and other university staff, called out workers at four Lagos State institutions: Lagos State University (LASU), its College of Medicine, and the state universities of science and technology and of education. Lecturers belonging to the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) at LASU and the two specialist universities had already been on indefinite strike since September 15.

The state government reneged on agreements covering revised salaries, allowances and arrears dating back to January. Workers demand implementation of the new salary structure, payment of nine months of arrears and other outstanding benefits.

The Lagos action is part of a wider wave of disputes in Nigerian universities over implementation of the December 2025 federal-ASUU agreement, unpaid salaries, allowances and deteriorating conditions. Workers at several universities have taken strike action in recent months, while others are threatening fresh walkouts.

Nationally, ASUU warned it could reactivate its suspended nationwide strike without further notice unless federal and state governments fully implement the 2025 agreement. Other demands include payment of the remaining three-and-a-half months of salaries withheld during an earlier national strike, and the remittance of billions of naira deducted for pensions, cooperatives and union dues.

Nigerian public sector workers in three-day strike

Public sector workers across Nigeria staged a three-day nationwide warning strike October 2–4 over worsening economic hardship and the government’s failure to meet their demands.

Called by the Joint National Public Service Negotiating Council (JNPSNC), the action involved federal, state and local government employees. JNPSNC reported around 65 percent compliance nationwide and disruption to public services in several states.

Workers demand a petrol price cut to N500 a litre, and an immediate wage award to compensate workers for soaring living costs. Wages have been severely eroded by inflation, while rising transport, food, rent and school costs have intensified hardship for workers and their families.

The JNPSNC wants negotiations to begin on a new national minimum wage of at least N500,000 from 2027. The warning strike ended without a settlement.

Kenyan university workers begin nationwide strike over pay and funding

Lecturers and other staff at Kenya’s public universities began a nationwide strike on October 2, after negotiations over the 2025–2029 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) collapsed. The strike by lecturers and other university workers, represented by the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) and two other unions, has paralysed teaching and other activities, affecting more than 700,000 students.

Workers rejected the employers’ counteroffer of a 4 percent annual pay rise as inadequate, with lecturers calling it a “mockery.” They demand improved salaries and allowances, better medical cover, increased recruitment to address severe staff shortages and implementation of previous agreements. UASU also rejected a proposed Sh9.76 billion allocation for the four-year CBA as insufficient, while unions have raised broader demands over chronic underfunding of universities.

The strike remained in force on October 6, despite Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba ordering lecturers back to work and saying arrears from previous CBAs were cleared.

Libyan teachers stage nationwide strike over pay, arrears and school conditions

Teachers across Libya have escalated weeks of protests into an open-ended nationwide strike, disrupting the start of the school year at public schools.

Sit-ins began on September 13, when classes were due to resume, before the action broadened into a national walkout affecting both western and eastern Libya. The strike was still continuing on October 6.

Teachers demand higher and unified salaries, payment of outstanding financial entitlements, health insurance and improved working conditions. They also complain of deteriorating school facilities and shortages of equipment, with teachers and parents increasingly having to pay for basic educational materials themselves. Falling real wages and the rising cost of living have left many teachers struggling to meet everyday expenses.

The dispute has developed across Libya’s political divide, with teachers striking in areas controlled by both the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity and the eastern authorities under Khalifa Haftar. Workers in other sectors have threatened to join the action unless the government addresses the wider cost-of-living crisis and introduces a unified public sector pay system linked to inflation.

As of October 5, Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah had met Finance Minister Rashid Boughofa to discuss a unified pay proposal, while the teachers’ union warned against reopening schools.

Senegalese doctors complete another nationwide strike to win better conditions

Doctors, pharmacists and dental surgeons across Senegal completed a 72-hour nationwide strike on September 30, the latest in a series of stoppages called by the Autonomous Union of Doctors, Pharmacists and Dentists of Senegal (SAMES). The action ran September 28–30, with only emergency services maintained. It followed a 48-hour strike on September 23–24, for which the union claimed 99.64 percent participation.

Workers are demanding special employment status for medical workers, improved recruitment and career progression, better allowances and pensions, and reforms to medical, pharmaceutical and dental training. Other demands include increased staffing and major improvements to hospital infrastructure and equipment, including measures to address shortages that have affected both routine and specialist care.

The September 28–30 stoppage was called after talks with the Health Ministry failed to produce a satisfactory response.

Cape Town school bus operators in South Africa halt services over fuel price hike

Thousands of Western Cape pupils in South Africa had no transport to school on Tuesday, the first day of the new term, after small bus operators withdrew their services in protest at soaring diesel costs.

With fuel prices set to rise again on Wednesday—petrol by more than R3 a litre and diesel by between R2.84 and R3.24—the South African National Small Bus Operators Council said it could no longer afford to run learner transport at current rates. Around 59,000 children depend on the province’s scheme, though the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) said it was still establishing how many were affected.

Council spokesperson Praveen Singh said operators, who receive no fuel subsidy, are locked into fixed-price contracts and cannot add levies or pass on rising costs until a new agreement is negotiated with the WCED.

WCED spokesperson Bronagh Hammond said the department was reviewing its budget and had proposed a percentage increase, to be discussed at a meeting on Wednesday, October 7, while pleading budget constraints.

The dispute shows how the price crisis driven by the US war against Iran and the NATO-Ukraine war against Russia is hitting those least able to bear it: small operators and the families who depend on them.

Cape Town shack dwellers block highways over lack of toilets and water

Residents of the COVID informal settlement near Mfuleni blocked the N2 and R300 highways and Old Faure Road with burning tyres and debris on Monday, October 5. It was the fourth protest in a week, demanding the City of Cape Town install taps and toilets.

The settlement was established in 2020 during lockdown after residents lost their jobs and were unable to pay rent.

On Friday, October 31, 2025 [date to confirm], they marched to the offices of the Western Cape premier and Cape Town mayor and handed over memorandums. They have heard nothing back. The Premier's Office confirmed receiving the memorandums but say the matter was referred to the provincial Department of Local Government.

After six years in the settlement, residents still have no proper water supply and no chemical toilets. Residents must cross the busy N2 and R300 to relieve themselves on open land, and many have been injured or killed doing so.

Feeling unsafe, a mother and daughter use a bucket inside their shack to relieve themselves and empty it into a hole they dig. The entire settlement relies on a single tap that residents installed themselves, where long queues form each morning as people prepare for school and work and the water drips out slowly. Elderly residents living far from the tap spend part of their grant money to pay youths R10 to haul water by wheelbarrow and trolley.

The response of the authorities to these protests has been to send in the police, not plumbers. Police spokesperson Ndakhe Gwala said a case of public violence would be opened after about 500 people protested, and on Monday police dispersed the crowd, though no arrests or injuries were reported.

Tshwane security guards in South Africa picket after contracts lapse and jobs vanish

South African security officers picketed Tshwane House on October 5, demanding answers after the expiry of the City of Tshwane's security contracts left them jobless.

The Kwanale Officers, Cleaners and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (KOCAWUSA) national coordinator Andries Diphapang Potsane said the workers lost their jobs on October 1 and were not informed the contracts were ending. They do not know where they stand as the city moves to appoint new providers.

The union has written to the city asking it to suspend the process until its concerns are addressed. Potsane said the pickets would stay at Tshwane House until the workers' demands were met. "It was not a march," he said. "It was just a picket."

For the workers, the sudden loss of income means immediate hardship. Security officer Matima Nkoana said the loss of income means they cannot pay school fees and transport, and children may be refused results or report cards. He said, "We are busy fighting crime, but the city is creating crime." Some municipal properties have been left without any guards at all since the contracts expired.

KOCAWUSA says its members want to know whether they will be retained or absorbed by the companies that eventually win the contracts.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact