

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.

Spanish metalworkers in Murcia face tear gas and rubber bullets in strike for better pay and conditions

Metalworkers in Spain's Murcia region began an indefinite strike Tuesday, after negotiations over wages and working conditions failed. The stoppage affects around 35,000 workers in metalworking, industrial assembly, maintenance and subcontracting.

The CCOO, UGT and USO union members demand wage increases that should not be cancelled out by removing existing pay supplements, including an industrial allowance of €24 a day. They also want protections for subcontracted workers and sick-pay provisions.

The first day of the strike saw pickets and road blockades around Cartagena's Valle de Escombreras industrial complex, the Repsol refinery, the Navantia shipyards and other industrial sites. The Guardia Civil police used tear gas, rubber bullets and warning shots to disperse workers from blocking access roads and disrupting traffic.

Doctors in Spain strike for improved pay and working conditions

Doctors in several regions of Spain began or continued strikes Wednesday over pay, excessive workloads, long working hours and deteriorating conditions in public healthcare.

The disputes follow the suspension of a planned nationwide indefinite strike, after the calling of early general elections halted progress on the proposed Statute Framework for healthcare workers. This left regional governments as the focus of many demands.

Doctors began indefinite strikes in the Valencian Community and Catalonia, but following the fatal train crash at Urda in Toledo province, Madrid's medical strike committee suspended the remaining stoppages scheduled for October 29–30, out of respect for the victims and their families.

Further regional strikes are planned for November, including in Castilla-La Mancha and Andalusia.

Norwegian offshore oil workers strike for pay rise

Workers at Norwegian subsea services company Reach Subsea walked

out October 17, after wage negotiations with the employer broke down. They say the company's offer fell well short of their expectations and the terms achieved by comparable groups.

The strike initially involved six offshore employees covered by their union SAFE, which represents around 130 workers at Reach Subsea, but had risen to 11 by October 20. Nineteen union members also joined a strike demonstration outside the company headquarters in Haugesund.

Reach Subsea provides inspection, maintenance and other underwater services to offshore oil industries. The dispute reflects continuing tensions over pay and conditions in Norway's offshore services sector, where workers are seeking terms comparable to those received by other groups.

Strike by refuse collectors in London borough over working conditions

Around 40 UK workers employed by FCC Waste Management began a five-day stoppage Monday. FCC is under contract to provide refuse collection on behalf of the **London Borough of Havering—run by the far-right Reform UK**. They are employed as drivers and loaders.

The Unite union members are protesting excessive workloads, welfare concerns and vehicle safety. Workers suffer fatigue resulting from regular excessive overtime as they struggle to complete rounds. They accuse FCC of failing to shorten work times in the recent hot weather, leading to some loaders suffering heatstroke. They are also protesting staff shortages. While additional housing in the borough has increased rounds, no additional staff have been recruited.

The Unite members have raised concerns over working conditions since 2023, when FCC took over the waste collection contract. To minimise the impact of the strike, FCC used staff on other municipal contracts together with agency staff.

Staff working in the London borough of Barnet walk out over pay and working conditions

Staff working for Barnet Homes and Your Choice Barnet in the UK capital began a 24-hour stoppage on Tuesday. The two organisations are wholly owned by Barnet Council, providing housing and care services to Barnet residents. Originally run as in-house services, they are now delivered by workers on inferior pay and conditions.

The Unison union members voted by an 88 percent majority on a 55 percent turnout for the action. Among their demands are a 36-hour week, 31 days annual leave, council overtime and sick pay rates, and access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Picket lines were established at the Rosa Morrison Day Centre, the Community Space Day Centre and outside Barnet Council Office. A rally for all strikers was held at Barnet Council Office following the picket.

Further stoppages planned by blood analysis staff at Lancashire hospital trust in England

Staff working for the blood science department at Lancashire Teaching Hospital Trust (LTHT) in England have announced further stoppages. They will walk out on November 2–6, 9–13, 16–20 and 23–27.

The Unite union members based at Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital and Burnley General Hospital first took action in June this year. The dispute is over problems related to holiday pay irregularities, missing overtime and absence pay, leaving the staff out of pocket.

Rolling strike action took place over the summer and autumn. Unite accused LTHT of being willing to spend £1 million—£60,000 a week—on agency staff to mitigate the industrial action rather than engage in negotiations.

Porters at Reading hospital. England walk out to protest overtime rate cut

Around 100 porters working for the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading in England began a five-day stoppage on Monday.

The GMB union members, who held a two-day stoppage in September over the same issue, are protesting a cut in overtime rates. Many rely on overtime to manage financially.

GMB regional organiser, Louis Bryson, said, “The recent offer of an interim payment on overtime from the Trust was unacceptable for members, as all it would do is postpone members’ lapse into poverty for a few months.”

Continuing protests across Iran as economic conditions deteriorate

Monday saw protests by telecommunication retirees in several cities in Iran, including Ham, Isfahan, Kermanshah and Tehran. They were protesting the inadequacy of their pensions. The protest in Tehran received enthusiastic support from passersby and car drivers.

On Sunday, Social Security Organisation retirees protested in Ahvaz, Rasht, Shush and Tehran. They called for the release of imprisoned protestors and accused the government of looting peoples’ pockets.

That day, school and public transport drivers also protested in Karaj against diesel fuel shortages. In Iranshahr, bakers were on strike.

The ongoing US naval blockade and decades of US sanctions have left Iran’s economy devastated. This is exacerbated by the imminent threats of further military attacks by the US and Israel.

Gaza relief agency staff strike over cutbacks

Staff at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees (UNRWA) declared a 10-day administrative strike on Monday.

The Arab Staff Union members are protesting cutbacks, staff layoffs and plans to privatise key programmes. They launched the stoppage with a march, holding banners protesting the agency’s policies.

Protests in Syrian cities after shooting death of disabled man by Israeli forces

Anti-Israel protests took place in several Syrian cities, including Damascus, Homs and Idlib, following the shooting death of a young disabled man on October 22. He was shot following an incursion by Israeli military forces into Syrian territory.

Lebanese internet provider workers begin indefinite stoppage

Workers employed by the Lebanese internet provider, Ogero, began an indefinite strike Tuesday. They are demanding amendments to Law 431, relating to workers’ rights and benefits.

Law 431, issued in 2002, relates to the regulation of telecommunication services in Lebanon.

Union members will refuse to attend work centres, and all emergency cases must be assessed by a crisis centre established by the union to monitor their nature.

Striking workers at electricity company in Benin, Nigeria assaulted and arrested by police

Electricity workers at the Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) in Edo State, Nigeria continued strike action this week over demands for salary increases, implementation of the national minimum wage, pay harmonisation and promotion grievances.

The strike, begun October 19 by National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) members, disrupted electricity supplies across Edo, Delta, Ekiti and Ondo states. Workers in the latter three states suspended their action following government-mediated talks, but the dispute continued in Edo.

Armed police occupied BEDC headquarters in Benin City on October 23, following the arrest and alleged assault of striking union officials. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) accused the Edo State government of deploying soldiers and suspected thugs in a night raid on October 22 against workers monitoring the strike.

Edo State NUEE chairman William Uwumarogie and other union members were arrested and subsequently released. Uwumarogie was hospitalised with injuries allegedly sustained during the attack. More than 10 armed police officers and five patrol vehicles were deployed outside the company headquarters.

The NLC accused Governor Monday Okpebholo’s administration of organising state-sponsored violence against strikers while simultaneously requesting more time to settle labour disputes at negotiations in Abuja.

Kenyan public university workers continue nationwide strike as pay

talks resume

Lecturers and other university workers in Kenya are continuing their nationwide strike, begun October 2, over pay and conditions. The strike has disrupted teaching and other academic activities at public universities, leaving thousands of students unable to resume their studies.

Negotiations resumed in Nairobi on Tuesday between government officials, university managements and unions over the 2025–2029 Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs).

The Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU), Kenya Universities Staff Union (KUSU) and KUDHEIHA rejected a government offer of KSh11.9 billion to fund the four-year agreement, saying it fell short of workers' demands. The government initially offered KSh9.76 billion. Workers are demanding improved salaries, allowances and other benefits, together with guarantees that the agreements will be fully funded and implemented.

Talks chaired by Labour and Skills Development Principal Secretary Shadrack Mwadime were adjourned until October 28, without agreement. Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba said the government was seeking additional funding, but insisted that any settlement must be financially sustainable. The strike continues to disrupt public higher education across the country.

Kenyan public health union suspends public health officers' nationwide stoppage

The KEHPFPH union in Kenya suspended the public health officers' nationwide strike for 30 days to allow negotiations with the government over outstanding grievances. The decision, announced October 25, follows 94 days of action that disrupted services at government hospitals and other public health facilities across the country.

While claiming the strike was not over, the unions handed the initiative to the employers. The suspension leaves the workers' grievances over pay, staff shortages and permanent contracts unresolved.

Even as the union leadership are sabotaging the struggle by health workers, Kenyan police arrested several demonstrators in Nairobi on October 26 during protests against soaring fuel prices and the rising cost of living. Running clashes erupted in the central business district, as protesters gathered on Moi Avenue and Kimathi Street despite a heavy police presence.

The demonstrations followed the latest fuel price increases, pushing petrol to KSh226.96 per litre, diesel to KSh227.76 and kerosene to KSh219.87. Organised by the Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, the protest was expected to attract between 500 and 900 people demanding the removal of fuel taxes that are placing an increasing burden on working-class households.

Legal Aid workers strike in Pretoria, South Africa over frozen posts and unmanageable workloads

Legal Aid workers protested outside the Department of Justice in Pretoria last week, to be told that Justice Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi would not meet them to receive a memorandum of their grievances.

The South African Lawyers and Allied Workers Union (SALAWU) members are demanding frozen vacancies, excessive workloads, salary

disparities, including the Occupational Specific Dispensation pay scales, and that a dispute over the retirement age of 60 are addressed.

The strike disrupted magistrates' and high court schedules, with accused people who depend on legal aid reportedly appearing in court without free representation and cases being postponed. SALAWU spokesperson Michael Motaung said frozen posts and staff shortages make it impossible to cover every court as required by the constitution and the Legal Aid Act, and that the minister "must release the funds."

The workers' conditions and the access of poor defendants to a lawyer are thus bound up together. The same budget freezes that overload staff leaves those who cannot afford private counsel without representation.

Khayelitsha residents block highway in South Africa over lack of water and electricity

Residents of three informal settlements in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa barricaded the highway October 23 with burning tyres, demanding water and electricity. The protest by people from Ethembeni, Empolweni and Island lasted about three hours and forced law enforcement to reroute traffic.

It came two weeks after two shacks burned down in Ethembeni, where there was no water to put out the fire. People were left scooping water from a reed-filled wetland.

Around 450 families in Ethembeni rely on four taps, with half often dry, and there has been no reliable supply since residents settled in 2020. Jevu, who lives with her two children on child support grants, pays teenagers R10 to fetch 20 litres of water, money she says would otherwise go on food and laundry. Others store water in basins and containers because pressure collapses. With no formal electricity, residents pay fixers R300 to hook up illegally to the grid, connections they say set their shacks alight.

The City of Cape Town's response was to blame residents, attributing leaks to illegal connections.

Municipal workers in Johannesburg, South Africa defy arrests in fight over R5.4 billion owed since 2016

Municipal workers in Johannesburg, South Africa staged a protest Monday to demand the city pay the R5.4 billion in benefits it agreed in 2016. The money was negotiated to correct longstanding pay scale disparities and the underpayment of workers who keep the city's basic services running.

The protest brought parts of Johannesburg to a standstill, including a blockade of the busy M1 highway. The city responded with force rather than negotiation. Metro Police arrested several SAMWU members on charges of inciting public violence, an attempt to criminalise workers for demanding a settlement the city itself signed up to a decade ago.

Workers say the city has paid only a fraction of what it owes them. According to SAMWU, the sum has accumulated to R10.3 billion, of which workers have received R1.2 billion. By the union's account, R5.2 billion should have been paid in July 2026, with the balance due in July 2027.

Students at South Africa's University of Johannesburg protest proposed fee hikes as exams are disrupted

Students at South Africa's University of Johannesburg's Auckland Park campus protested Monday against possible fee increases in 2027, pulling classmates out of examination venues and demanding exams be stopped.

In June, students objected to additional accommodation charges imposed on some NSFAS-funded students living in private off-campus residences. These students depend on state funding because they and their families cannot pay, and they now face new costs while the prospect of higher fees looms. Media coverage has focused on the disruption and vandalism rather than the impact on working-class families if the price of an education rises year after year.



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