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.

Meat industry workers in Spain strike for improved pay and conditions

Workers across Spain's meat industry began a five-day strike November 9, after a breakdown in negotiations for a new national collective agreement. The stoppages, scheduled to run until November 13, affect approximately 126,000 workers in slaughterhouses, meat-processing plants, cutting rooms and associated services.

The CCOO and UGT union members demand annual wage increases of at least 4 percent, linked to inflation, with backdated payments and guarantees that increases will not be offset against other benefits. They are demand a reduction in annual working hours, payment for their 15-minute meal break, improved paid leave and better provisions for partial retirement.

The workers say production rates are being intensified in the strenuous environments of slaughterhouse and processing plants and demand measures to curb this, along with necessary improvements in health and safety.

This is one of a growing number of strikes, including a nationwide walkout November 11 of metalworkers in Murcia, teachers, doctors and rail workers, joining mass youth demonstrations in Spain and across Europe.

Strike by nursery workers in Barnsley, England over outsourcing

Around 30 nursery workers across six children's nurseries in Barnsley, England walked out for the day on Monday. The stoppage included a rally outside the recently closed nursery in Grimethorpe.

The GMB union members, who voted unanimously for the action, are protesting the outsourcing of the nurseries by the far-right Reform UK-led Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to private provider, Limetree.

While it was agreed that the transferred workers would retain their current pay and conditions, it excluded access to the Local Government Pension Scheme. Instead, they were transferred to the company's basic statutory pension scheme, meaning lower pension payouts and the loss of Death in Service entitlement.

Further one day stoppages are planned for November 18 and 26.

Stoppages by outsourced rail workers at two UK rail companies

UK rail workers employed by outsourcing companies Bidvest Noonan and Rail Gourmet under contract to publicly owned TransPennineExpress (TPE) are set to walk out Friday. Bidvest Noonan provides cleaning services, while Rail Gourmet provides catering services. TPE runs passenger services across the north of England.

The Rail, Maritime and Rail (RMT) union members are protesting low pay and want access to improved sick pay and pension provision.

In a separate dispute, RMT members employed by outsourcing company Gate Solutions under contract to state-owned rail company LNER are scheduled to hold a 24-hour stoppage, also on Friday. It follows a previous 24-hour stoppage October 16.

They are protesting Gate stopping paying the Real Living Wage figure to its employees, instead paying a lower rate just above the legal minimum wage. The RMT also accuses LNER of racism. The union's research shows "ethnic minority workers are four times more likely to be on one of LNER's outsourcing contracts than directly employed."

LNER runs mainline east coast services between Edinburgh and London. Picket lines will be set up at sites including London King's Cross, Doncaster, Leeds and Edinburgh.

Train managers at UK rail company to strike over driver only operated plans

UK train managers working for Chiltern Railways are set to walk out Thursday in an ongoing dispute over plans by the company to introduce driver only operated (DOO) trains on its new proposed East West rail route. When completed, the new route will connect Oxford and Cambridge.

The RMT members oppose the planned use of DOO trains as it would abolish the safety critical role of the managers.

The walkout will disrupt services between Stratford-upon-Avon, Leamington Spa and Birmingham Moor Street. Picket lines are planned for stations at Birmingham Moor Street, Stourbridge Junction and Banbury Station.

Nuclear weapons workers at submarine base in Scotland take industrial action over pay

Around 70 workers employed at the Royal Naval Armaments Depot in Coulport, Scotland began an overtime ban Monday after rejecting an

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inadequate pay offer. They are employed by ABL Alliance, which comprises AWE plc, Babcock Marine and Lockheed Martin to service the UK's nuclear submarine fleet.

The Unite union members voted by an over 98 percent majority seeking an improved pay offer. The overtime ban will be followed by a three-day stoppage from November 16.

Continuing protests in Iran over social conditions

A strike by municipal bus drivers in the Iranian city of Yazd has entered its second week. The drivers are protesting the increasing costs of tyres, batteries, engine oil and spare parts, which have risen several multiple times over the course of a year.

Sunday saw protests by Social Security retirees in Ahvaz. They gathered outside the provincial General Directorate of Social Security, calling on the government to address their deteriorating living conditions.

Retired workers held protests in Shush and Haft Tappeh over water and power outages, accusing the government of being indifferent to their plight. Retirees of the state-owned Bank Saderat also held demonstrations to protest the rapid erosion of the value of their pensions resulting from high living costs and the impact of inflation.

Decades of US sanctions and the recent naval blockade has resulted in the devastation of the Iranian economy. The threat of further military attacks by the US continues in the aftermath of the midterm elections.

Ghanaian judicial workers continue indefinite nationwide strike over pay dispute

Judicial workers across Ghana are continuing their indefinite nationwide strike, begun November 2, over delayed salary reviews, unpaid arrears and worsening conditions of service. The Judicial Service Staff Association of Ghana (JUSAG) and the Judicial Service Staff Association of Ghana's Union announced on November 9 that the stoppage would continue after the government failed to respond to their latest demands.

The unions submitted revised demands on November 5, following negotiations with government officials and Judicial Service management. They said they had already made concessions to accommodate the government's financial constraints but received no official response. JUSAG General Secretary Abdulai Yakubu described the revised proposals as the unions' final compromise, warning that workers would remain on strike unless an acceptable agreement was reached.

The stoppage has disrupted court proceedings across Ghana, delaying hearings and access to justice. A legal rights organisation estimated that more than 2,000 people arrested since the strike began have been unable to obtain judicial decisions on bail or remand.

Egyptian garment workers protest factory closure and mass dismissals

Hundreds of garment workers demonstrated outside the Baby Coca/Hela factory in Alexandria, Egypt on November 1–2, after its sudden closure left around 1,400 employees without jobs or wages.

Workers arriving at the factory in the Abis district of the city on November 1 found the gates locked, and were informed by security guards that the plant had permanently closed. Management gave workers no prior notice, despite assurances that production would continue.

Workers said they had not received their October wages, severance payments or the documentation needed to seek alternative employment. They also discovered that the company failed to remit social insurance contributions for around a year, despite regularly deducting payments from their salaries. The factory, previously operated by a Chinese company, had most recently been run by Sri Lanka-based Hela Apparel Holdings. Around 1,200 Hela employees and 200 Baby Coca workers were affected.

Police intervened to disperse the protests, with the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms reporting that female workers were forcibly searched and assaulted by police officers. One elderly worker reportedly collapsed and suffered convulsions. The Center for Trade Union and Workers Services demanded payment of outstanding wages and negotiations with workers' representatives.

Thousands of Festive Chicken workers continue strike for living wage, medical aid and safe conditions

Thousands of workers at Festive Chicken, a subsidiary of Astral Foods, are continuing an indefinite strike begun October 29 in Gauteng and Mpumalanga in South.

More than 100 workers and supporters gathered outside Astral Foods' Olifantsfontein processing plant on Tuesday, where strikers have maintained a picket line. They are demanding a monthly wage of R13,500, medical aid benefits and safer working conditions. The strike followed a wage deadlock at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).

On October 30, the Labour Court ruled that the workers were entitled to take part in a protected strike and barred the company from disciplining or dismissing them. Festive Chicken is part of Astral, one of South Africa's largest poultry producers, whose products supply KFC, Nando's, Spur and Hungry Lion. The Olifantsfontein plant is central to its operations.

Take-home wages range from R5,400 to R6,500 a month for 45-hour weeks, below the roughly R7,300 earned by farm workers on 48-hour weeks. Dikeledi Rosina Mogwenya, who has worked in the hatchery since 2003, said her workload had nearly tripled, with the number of machines per worker rising from 12 to 35, while her pay barely moved. A single worker must count 35,000 chicks a day. "The cost of living is too high," she said, listing school fees, rent and transport.

Nomasonto Ncwane, a 10-year employee, described the contempt of management. Workers are rewarded each September with free meals, only to be told at the end of October that the company is making a loss, while managers "make millions."

Workers also report dust causing respiratory problems and long shifts in cold rooms without adequate protective clothing or extra allowances. Lawyers for Human Rights and the Casual Workers Advice Office have helped workers contest alleged intimidation and threats of dismissal.

Nigerian tertiary education workers begin two-week strike in Taraba State

Workers at five state-owned tertiary institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria, began a two-week warning strike November 9 over unpaid

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entitlements, salary deductions and the government's failure to implement agreed allowances. The Joint Action Committee of Tertiary Institutions announced the action following more than four months of unsuccessful negotiations with the state government.

Other grievances include withheld union dues and savings contributions, and the failure to implement the N70,000 transport relief payment for public servants.

Nigerian public sector workers begin three-day strike over withheld local government funds

Public sector workers in Osun State, Nigeria, began a three-day strike on November 9 over the continued withholding of statutory allocations to local government councils. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) called the stoppage in support of Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees members, who have suffered financial hardship as a result of the funding dispute. The strike was scheduled to continue until midnight on November 11.

Government offices throughout the state were shut on Monday, including the state secretariat and House of Assembly in Osogbo. Local council offices were also closed, while pupils at public schools were sent home as teachers joined the walkout. The NLC said the federal and state governments had failed to respond to a seven-day ultimatum demanding the release of funds, threatening workers' allowances, pensions, gratuities and other entitlements.

Zimbabwean nurses strike over low pay and deteriorating working conditions

Nurses in Zimbabwe have taken strike action over inadequate salaries, reduced allowances and worsening conditions in public hospitals. Many nurses reported receiving less pay than in previous months, despite the rising cost of living. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions issued a statement on November 5, supporting the action and demanding the government urgently address workers' grievances.

The nurses are demanding substantial salary increases, improved housing and transport allowances, and free medical treatment at public hospitals, which many say they can no longer afford. They complain that government-provided buses do not accommodate their shift patterns, leaving workers struggling to travel to work. Chronic shortages of essential medical supplies and equipment, alongside inadequate staffing levels, are further undermining patient care.

Kenyan Coca-Cola workers win court ruling allowing strike over unresolved grievances

Workers at Coca-Cola Beverages in Kenya won a court ruling November 10 allowing them to take strike action over unresolved employment disputes.

The Kenya Union of Commercial, Food and Allied Workers had issued a 21-day strike notice on May 26, threatening industrial action from June 16 over collective bargaining negotiations, job evaluations, medical benefits, outsourcing and the dismissal of 56 workers.

The company, which employs more than 1,500 workers, sought a court order prohibiting the strike.

The union accused management of failing to implement the Labour Ministry's recommendations by withholding payments owed to dismissed workers and refusing medical coverage for employees' spouses. It also opposes outsourcing arrangements that threaten existing jobs. A union shop steward was dismissed on June 5, allegedly for trade union activities.

On November 7, Kenya's Employment and Labour Relations Court rejected the company's request for a blanket strike ban, ruling that it had failed to demonstrate sufficient grounds for prohibiting any industrial action.

However, the court has barred strikes over all matters covered by existing collective bargaining agreement or already before the courts. It ordered Coca-Cola to provide a payment schedule for the 56 dismissed workers and any outstanding entitlements. The union retains the right to strike over unresolved disputes, although there is no confirmation that industrial action has begun.

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