

National strike of South African community health workers; Nigerian doctors in Ondo state on indefinite strike; Zimbabwe's teachers continue strike; UK engineers at Rolls Royce factory continue strike

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.

Africa

South African community health workers strike over pay and conditions

Community Health Workers (CHWs) in South Africa went on indefinite national strike Wednesday demanding to be employed by the National Health Department. Most of the country's 55,000 CHWs do not have the salary, benefits, support or protection given to formally employed healthcare workers. Most provinces contract their work out via NGOs.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union members work at grassroots level and in the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic. They play a vital role in health promotion and disease prevention, especially in rural areas and townships.

South Africa recorded 740,254 coronavirus cases, with 19,951 fatalities.

South African food workers sacked in strike for better conditions

Over 80 workers who protested over unsafe conditions at a snack manufacturer in Queenstown, South Africa have been suspended or sacked.

The South African Security and Allied Workers Union members took part in an unprotected strike and then sought to widen support through social media. The employer, Trudar Foods, applied to Port Elizabeth Labour Court to prohibit further online protests against the firm.

Nigerian doctors on indefinite strike in Ondo State

Resident doctors from the University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital in Ondo State, Nigeria are on indefinite strike action due to not being paid their salaries and allowances. The strike began November 9 after the resignation of over 50 doctors over the issue.

Doctors complained they are owed four-and-a half months of salary arrears as well as COVID-19 allowances and other entitlements.

Police brutality, poverty, mass unemployment and inequality has ignited mass protests in Nigeria. Nigeria has 64,336 reported cases of COVID-19 and 1,160 deaths.

Nigerian oil workers heading for indefinite national strike

Oil workers in Nigeria are preparing for indefinite national stoppage over the introduction of IPPIS, which has led to three months' salary arrears.

IPPIS is an information communications technology payroll system initiated by the federal government.

In August PENGASSAN and NUPENG suspended a warning strike over the introduction of IPPIS for oil workers after union agreements made with the federal government, which the unions say the government has now broken.

Zimbabwe striking teachers threatened with losing salaries

The Zimbabwe government is threatening to stop striking teachers' salaries to force them to return to work. Teachers refused to return to schools at the beginning of term September 28 to protest poverty wages and the unsafe reopenings during the pandemic.

The Zimbabwe Teachers' Association, Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe and other unions had appealed to President Emmerson Mnangagwe, who is overseeing brutal attacks on public sector workers. Runaway inflation around 800 percent means teachers' salaries do not cover bills or the basics of life.

Teachers were left isolated by the public sector unions' recent betrayal of the health workers' four-month strike for a living wage and adequate PPE. Nurses' salaries were also stopped.

Zimbabwe has reported 8,667 coronavirus cases and 255 deaths—likely an underestimate given the collapse of the health service.

Gambian nurses protest unpaid salaries

On November 3, around 50 Gambian nurses on COVID-19 frontline duties stopped work and marched to the Ministry of Health, angry at the non-payment of their salaries since August.

The nurses have stayed away from their families and made other sacrifices to help others.

Sudanese port workers hold three-day strike

Port workers in Port Sudan held a three-day strike beginning November 9 to oppose the privatisation of the Red Sea state ports.

The Port Workers Union is collaborating with the implementation of privatisation, demanding to be recognised as the workers' only representative, to negotiate away their members' hard-won rights.

Courts and unions enforce return to work at Kenyan hospitals

Health workers in Kenya walked out on November 9 to protest delays in promotions and re-designations. They accused Nairobi Metropolitan Services of breaking a collective bargaining agreement made in September.

On November 6, the courts told the health unions to send their members back to work and the unions complied.

Kenya has 64,558 reported cases of COVID-19 and 1,154 reported deaths.

Europe

Rolls Royce jet engine manufacturer workers continue strike in north west England

Workers at Rolls Royce jet engine factory in Barnoldswick in north west England vowed to continue their stoppage until Christmas Eve. The workforce of 500 voted by a 94 percent majority to strike beginning last week against company plans to move 350 jobs involved in making blades to a facility in Singapore.

The workers originally voted to strike for three weeks. The strike is impacting five departments at the factory making blades for the Trent jet engine. The strikers have maintained a picket line of four pickets in line with COVID-19 social distancing rules.

The Unite union is calling for a reversal of the company decision, or for alternative work employing the same number of workers to be carried out at the Barnoldswick factory. Rolls Royce is the major employer in the town, where the jet engine was developed.

UK academic staff at London University to be balloted for strike action

Academic staff at the University of East London (UEL) will be balloted for possible strike action. The ballot is to run from November 17 to December 16. UEL wants to cut staff posts by 92. It has cut 82 posts through voluntary redundancy and the remaining 10 posts would be cut through compulsory redundancies. Of the 10, seven are academic posts. UEL is claiming it needs to reduce staff numbers as a result of falling student numbers, citing the COVID-19 pandemic.

The University and College Union (UCU) is proposing to launch a legal challenge of the basis of discrimination. UCU called on the university to make cuts without resorting to compulsory redundancies and has criticised UEL for refusing to consider talks brokered by ACAS, the government mediation service. Four of the academics slated for dismissal are UCU activists.

Strike at Scottish university called off by union

A strike by academic staff due to begin Tuesday was called off by the University and College Union (UCU).

The university staff on a 66 percent turnout voted by a 77 percent majority to take action against university plans to cut 130 jobs through compulsory redundancies. In 2017, the university cut 70 jobs.

The UCU is not opposed to job cuts, only that they are achieved through voluntary redundancies and reached an agreement to establish a partnership with management to carry out the cuts.

Refuse workers in Doncaster, England to be balloted for strike action

Workers employed by contractor Suez Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd in the northern city Doncaster are being balloted for strike action by the Unite union. Workers accuse the company

of bullying and harassment, including the suspension of Unite representative Damien Nota.

In a consultative ballot of around 100 workers, a 95 percent majority voted in favour of balloting for full strike action. The ballot began on Tuesday. Unite said it remains open to negotiations to avoid the dispute.

Consultative ballot of UK telecom workers

BT telecom workers are currently taking part in a consultative ballot, lasting until December 10. The Communications Workers Union ballot conducted will establish if telecom workers want to strike against BT's reconfiguration plans that will mean job cuts and role changes. There has not been a national BT strike since 1994.

The WSWS wrote on September 21, the "consultative or indicative ballot is becoming the trade union bureaucracy's weapon of choice in avoiding strikes and maintaining their role as partners with employers."

Legally, the bureaucracy can hold such ballots at any time under their own rules. Unions are required by law to hold a further legal ballot to proceed with any industrial action. The consultative ballot never implies action being taken, even if a massive vote in favour is returned.

Middle East

Protests by Iraqi civil servants over pay arrears

On Sunday, hundreds of civil servants in the Iraqi governorates of Karbala, Babil, Muthanna and Maysan held protests over wage arrears. The workers are owed wages for September and October. The Iraqi government blames its failure to pay on time to the ongoing financial crisis after years of invasion followed by civil war.

Israeli trade union federation strike threat over quarantine payments

On Sunday, the Israeli trade union federation, Histadrut announced its intention to launch a general strike to demand quarantined workers are paid as promised. In late September, the Ministry of Finance, Histadrut and employers' organisations agreed to pay workers who were in quarantine because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workers have not been paid because of a hold up in parliament. Under Israeli law Histadrut can launch the strike 14 days after giving notification.

Strike by Cypriot construction workers

Construction workers in the coastal city of Limassol Cyprus held a one-day strike Wednesday. The Sek trade union members work for construction firm J&P Avax, building the “City of Dreams” casino in Limassol. They are protesting ongoing late payment of wages.

Strike threat by Cypriot radiography workers

On Wednesday, representatives of radiographers in Cyprus announced their intention to call a two-hour strike today from 10am to 12 noon. They said they would provide emergency cover. An agreement for an increase in on call payments was reached with the health ministry at the end of last year but has yet to be implemented.