

National strike of Croatian educators; Zimbabwe doctors' stoppage into seventh week

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

25 October 2019

Strikes by Croatian educators

Around 700 lecturers and non-teaching staff working in science and higher education planned to strike in Croatia on Thursday. They are seeking a pay increase to bring them in line with the pay of civil servants. The government has refused their claim. They plan to strike one day each week.

On Monday, teachers in primary and elementary education held a one-day nationwide strike. The teachers also walked out earlier in the month for a pay increase. In addition to a 6.12 percent pay rise for all public sector staff, teachers are seeking an additional increase related to the demands of their work.

Strike threat by Finnish postal workers

Around 9,000 Finnish postal workers are threatening a possible two-week strike beginning November 11. The members of the PAU union are employed at the state-owned postal service Posti.

PAU made it clear they would not proceed with the strike if the government offered negotiating talks. If it goes ahead, the strike would hit the sorting and delivery of mail. The union accuses Posti of seeking to create a tier of lower paid workers, increase working hours and amend shift patterns.

German airline cabin crew strike

Cabin crew at four Lufthansa controlled airlines in Germany walked out on Sunday.

The strike hit the Lufthansa subsidiaries, Eurowings, Germanwings, SunExpress and Lufthansa CityLine. Beginning at 5am, it was originally planned to finish at 11am. However the stoppage extended until midnight. The strike led to the cancellation of around 100 flights.

Members of the flight attendants' union UFO are demanding a pay increase and improved working conditions. Lufthansa has launched a legal challenge to UFO's right to represent cabin crew.

The strike at Lufthansa is only the latest in a series of strikes by airline workers across Europe. Lufthansa staff and cabin crew and ground staff

employed by Italian airline Alitalia walked out over the summer. Last month, the British Airline Pilots Association called off a pilots' strikes at British Airways and the UK arm of Ryanair.

March and protest by Greek local authority workers

Greek local authority workers marched to the parliament building in Athens on Saturday. On their way, they dumped garbage outside the Interior Ministry building.

The POE-OTA union members were protesting over an article in the rightwing New Democracy's growth bill. The article would allow local authority mayors to open up services for cleaning, lighting and additional services to private contractors.

New Democracy came to office in July, after four years of EU-dictated austerity cuts imposed by the Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) government.

Workers strike in Bradford, England against Labour council cuts, union accepts redundancies

UK workers at Bradford's libraries, museums and galleries went on strike Monday and Tuesday. They held a demonstration in the city centre, carrying a coffin effigy bearing the slogan "No cuts to culture."

Bradford council workers face a 65 percent budget cut over two years to 2020 amounting to £760,000, threatening the existence of prestigious sites such as Bradford Industrial Museum, Cartwright Hall Gallery and the Bolling Hall Museum. The ancient Bolling Hall building is registered in the Domesday Book.

While the Labour Party-run council is slashing spending on culture, it is spending £1.4 million on its application to be considered the City of Culture.

Addressing the demonstration of around 30 strikers and supporters from the community, the Unite union regional organiser said he was realistic about the likelihood of job losses, and that the union would accept voluntary redundancies. The union's main aim is to reverse the council's policy of no negotiations, not to defend jobs and services.

Similar cuts are taking place across the UK, but the Unite union has kept the strikes isolated to separate localities.

Strike threat by Spanish women footballers

Around 200 women playing in the top division of women's football in Spain voted by 90 percent at a meeting Tuesday to strike.

They have been in discussion with the Association of Women's Football Clubs (ACFF) for more than a year to achieve a new collective bargaining agreement. The women players are seeking a full-time contractual agreement rather than the 20-hour part-time one being offered by the ACFF.

If a strike goes ahead next week, it could lead to the cancellation of the Champions League match between Manchester City and Atletico Madrid due to be played on October 30. However, under Spanish law representatives of the players and the ACFF must meet again to attempt a resolution before strike action can take place.

Google workers in Switzerland resist company's attempts to prevent meeting on unionisation

On Monday, scores of Google employees at the company's Zurich office in Switzerland defied management's attempts to prevent them holding an onsite meeting to discuss unionisation.

The meeting was addressed by representatives of media and telecom union Syndicom. In an email sent by Google management to prevent the meeting, it announced it would arrange a meeting to discuss union rights in Switzerland.

According to an online article by web site news platform Vox.com, so far Google has not taken any action against attendees at the meeting. It said it is not clear whether the employees will attempt to form a union at the site, but spoke of "continued employee dissent brewing beneath the surface at Google."

The Zurich Google facility employs around 2,000, many of whom are foreign nationals, unable to remain in Switzerland if they lost their jobs. According to Vox.com, Google employees at other sites posted memes in support of their Zurich colleagues.

Outsourced hospital staff in St Helens and Blackpool, England hold further strike

Several hundred UK catering and cleaning staff, working for contractor Compass at hospitals in St Helens and Blackpool, began their fourth round of strikes on October 18.

The Unite union members are demanding to be paid the same rate of £9.03 an hour as their NHS colleagues. They are currently paid £8.21 an hour. Also, they do not receive bonuses for working weekends and bank holidays and only receive statutory sick pay.

The current round of strike action was due to end Thursday. On Tuesday, a coach took some of the strikers to the Compass headquarters in Chertsey, Surrey to lobby in support of their campaign. They have rejected a lesser pay offer from Compass.

subheadJUK flooring production workers strike at factory in Derbyshire

Around 70 UK production workers employed by Forbo Flooring in Ripley, Derbyshire held a 48-hour strike Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Unite union members are holding a series of 48-hour strikes, which began last week and will continue until mid-December. They are demanding a three percent pay rise and have rejected a 2.3 percent offer from the company.

Strike by UK science museum group workers

Workers employed by the UK Science Museum Group walked out on Wednesday. The museums involved include the Science Museum in London, the Railway Museum in York, the Science and Media Museum in Bradford and Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

The Prospect union members are seeking a pay rise, after suffering a 10 percent cut in real terms pay since 2011. The strike is the latest in a long-running campaign by the museum workers.

Iranian factory workers attacked and arrested at factory protest

On Sunday and Monday, workers at the AzarAb factory in the western Iranian province of Markzi held a protest outside their factory. They were protesting privatisation of the company, a major manufacturing and construction concern.

The workers say that they are owed months of pay arrears. The protestors were attacked by police resulting in injuries and more than 20 being arrested.

Zimbabwean doctors' strike hardens as it enters its seventh week

Zimbabwe doctors continue to stay away from work to demand a living wage and adequate hospital resources.

Over the last year, the value of a doctor's wage fell from the equivalent of US \$500 monthly to US \$40, due to runaway inflation, now at 591 percent. The convertibility of the Zimbabwe dollar is currently 15.8 to USD \$1.

The Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association (ZHDA) members, mainly Junior Resident Medical Officers, have rejected a revised government offer negotiated by the Apex Council (public sector union federation). ZHDA pulled out of the Apex Council. They are demanding a wage increase in parity with the interbank rate to stabilise their income, an improvement of conditions, and an adequate supply of medicines and equipment.

The Apex Council signed a collective bargaining agreement with the government accepting a 100 percent pay increase for striking nurses and the rest of the public sector.

Around 300,000 public sector workers are staying at home as they cannot afford to travel to work. Nurses at the two largest hospitals in Harare are turning into work just two days a week and teachers are staying at home.

Sixty-one percent of Zimbabwe parents cannot afford to send their children to school.

A no-work no-pay policy was implemented on October 21 by the Health Service Board against the doctors in retribution for disobeying a court order to return to work.

President Emerson Mnangagwa tried to whip up hostility to the doctors,

claiming some represent outside forces trying to overthrow the government.

Nigerian unions call off threatened strike over minimum wage

The umbrella Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has called off a stoppage to demand the implementation of the national minimum wage(MW).

Workers in Delta state walked out on Thursday after failed negotiations the previous day, but the NLC immediately instructed them to return after the United Labour Congress pulled back from taking action. The state NLC chairman said he was waiting further instruction from the national body.

The government of President Buhari agreed a figure of N30,000 in November 2018, though the Trade Union Congress suggest N72,000 would be a real living wage for a worker and his family.

Many public sector workers still do not earn the 2011 MW of N18,000. In that year, N150 traded for one US dollar. It is now N360. This year fuel prices almost doubled and the federal government proposes to increase value added tax from 5 to 7.5 percent.

The unions called off several previous national strike threats in response to false government promises. The NLC explained their sellout saying it is to permit negotiations over pro-rata increases to the minimum wage for different grades.

South African university workers strike for equal pay and conditions continues

Seven hundred workers continue to strike at South Africa's University of Johannesburg over employment status. Strikers, out for 19 days, staged a demonstration October 18 at the university and handed in a memorandum of demands.

The cleaners and security staff, National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa members, are demanding overtime pay, and payment for Saturday work for security staff as well as being paid the permanent wage rate. The workers were brought onto the books in 2016 but are still paid as outsourced workers. Outsourced staff are paid less than half what is paid to fully employed workers and do not get the same benefits.

A labour court ruling, which has been ignored, determined that workers with three months continuous work should be brought onto the books and paid a rate equal to the rest of the workforce. In 2016, students protesting for a reduction in fees called for outsourced workers to be made permanent.

Zambian public sector threaten strike over unpaid wages

Zambian council workers are threatening to strike if authorities do not pay their outstanding wages.

The Zambia United Local Authorities Workers Union (ZULAWU) is pressing the local authority's ministry to pay an outstanding payment in 2017 and wages for August and September this year.

Proposed strikes would affect sixty-four local authorities throughout the country where arrears on some wages go beyond three months. No strike date was mentioned by ZULAWU.

Namibia pathology workers demonstrate over reneged wage agreement

Employees at Namibia's medical laboratories demonstrated last week outside government offices to demand an agreed wage and allowance increase.

Government ministers on behalf of the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP) refused to honour a contractual agreement to pay increases for the year 2019-2020, made in April this year.

The Namibia Public Workers Union claims a 10 percent wage increase, plus increases in allowances, were agreed with the NIP but not the government. The government claims the prestigious NIP is in dire financial straits cannot afford wage increases.

Suppliers of materials for medical analysis are not being paid so provision is being cut and hospital patients are suffering.

The NIP is a public sector establishment responsible for blood and pathology analysis with 40 laboratories across the country.

Liberian tax collectors strike over wage cuts

Workers at Liberia's Revenue Authority went on a go-slow/strike action on Monday against wage cuts.

They are protesting a salary harmonisation programme carried out by the government. On top of a reduction in pay from US \$1000 to US\$325 a month, wages are being reduced by a further 20 percent. An initial 6 percent reduction was implemented last September.

The action follows a go-slow/strike by teachers on October 14 over unpaid wages, which was met with state violence, including tear gas and baton attacks on supporting students, with some being knocked unconscious.

The teachers were to return to work on Monday, the day the tax workers implemented their action.

A recent education seminar held in Ghana with representatives from thirteen African nations called on African governments to invest in education, in defiance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The seminar noted that the IMF, World Bank and some donors were imposing caps on the education budgets of developing countries in the name of efficiency.



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