

Three-day strike at easyJet Portugal over staffing levels and working hours; Iranian nurses' strike intensifies after nurse dies from overwork; Nigerian security forces kill workers demonstrating against cost-of-living crisis

## 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.*

### Three-day strike at EasyJet Portugal in collective bargaining dispute

On Thursday, workers at EasyJet in Portugal began a three-day strike voted for by 99 percent of National Union of Civil Aviation Flight Personnel (SNPVAC) members.

The union accused the airline of ignoring issues over staffing levels and working hours.

The government imposed restrictive minimum service requirements on the strike, including most flights between Madeira and mainland Portugal. The SNPVAC said this was "as if they annulled our right to strike for the Madeira archipelago," *Lusa* reported. The minimum services not only covered flights from the remote islands of Madeira and the Azores, but also flights between Portugal and other European destinations.

The strike was further weakened by the division of workers across borders, enforced by the unions. While Portuguese easyJet workers voted to stop work en masse, the British airline reported it was still able to run 62 percent of its planned flights to and from Portugal, using crews based in other countries who were not called to join the strike.

### Rail maintenance workers in Portugal strike over job categories

On Thursday, workers in the maintenance workshops of state-owned rail company Comboios de Portugal (CP) held a 24-hour strike. They are on an overtime ban from August 9 to the end of the month.

The walkout was called by two unions which did not sign the agreement between CP and 11 other unions to call off a strike last month, *Lusa* reported.

The dispute is over a new collective agreement including new, more "flexible" job categories. It was accepted by the unions which had previously rejected it when CP promised to negotiate salaries again in September. One of the unions which called this week's strike said, "The

company wants to give us more work for the same money and we don't accept it at all."

### Portuguese civil servants call overtime ban against understaffing of immigration services

Civil servants at Portugal's Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA), the agency founded last year to administer immigration and asylum claims, will begin an overtime ban next week.

The National Federation of Unions of Workers in Public and Social Functions members are demanding higher staffing levels and permanent employment for contract workers. Many had already worked more than 150 hours of overtime in 2024, the legal limit, but were pressured to "continue to work overtime without being paid," *The Portugal News* reported.

Staff shortages have reportedly led to massive delays in processing applications for asylum, residence permits and other documents.

### Province-wide strike during Ferragosto holiday by commerce workers in Calabria, Italy

Workers in shops and other parts of the commerce sector in the Italian province of Calabria joined a one-day strike on Wednesday, coinciding with the national Ferragosto public holiday, on which many businesses close.

The CGIL, CISL and UIL unions wrote in a press release that "extreme precariousness and flexibility" in the sector means many workers cannot take holidays or Sundays off. They called for legislation mandating the closure of businesses on Ferragosto and other public holidays, *ANSA* reported.

### Striking workers at online gambling company in Georgia face threat

## **of mass dismissal**

More than 4,600 workers at Evolution Georgia, an online casino company, have been on strike since July 12 for better wages and working conditions, as well as calling for the dismissal of abusive managers.

The strike began after *Mautskebeli* published leaked internal chats in which managers made racist, sexist and other offensive remarks.

The company threatened to cut 1,000 jobs, claiming clients of its Swedish parent company no longer wanted to use the services of its Georgian subsidiary due to the strike, the *Caucasian Knot* reported. The union representing strikers said it believed the company was planning to fire those workers on their six-month probationary period who were unable to strike.

Evolution also suspended health insurance for all workers on strike. This week, several workers began a hunger strike to demand negotiations over their demands.

## **Strike against hundreds of job losses at refinery in France**

Workers at the ExxonMobil refinery in Port-Jérôme-sur-Seine in northern France began a new strike this week to oppose the closure of part of the site, with the loss of 647 jobs.

On the day job cuts and sales of several other sites were announced in April, when ExxonMobil claimed to have made losses of 500 million euros in France since 2018, the company's share price leaped by 7.8 percent, *Le Monde* reported. The company's global operations are massively profitable, and it paid USD 32.4 billion to shareholders in 2023.

The unions representing ExxonMobil workers in Port-Jérôme-sur-Seine rejected the company's "employment protection plan" (PSE), which includes redundancy payments capped at 17,000 euros, and called for the plan to be negotiated. ExxonMobil said if the unions did not sign the plan it would contact the regulator "with a view to approving a unilateral PSE," *Tendance Ouest* reported.

## **Bin collection strike in A Coruña, Spain, called off with no agreement after PSOE city government's strike-breaking**

Last week, workers at the waste collection service in the Spanish city of A Coruña voted by 64 percent to end an indefinite strike which lasted 46 days in a dispute over staffing levels with private operator PreZero.

The mayor Inés Rey, of the Socialist Party (PSOE), boasted that after the city's strike-breaking efforts, members of the STL union returned to work "without them having achieved any of their objectives, whatever they were," *Europa Press* reported.

Rey declared a health emergency, allowing the city to hire private strike-breakers. Three workers were fired during the strike, and many more sanctioned, as the city council blamed workers for bin fires lit across the city, which the STL denies. Only days after the strike ended, PreZero fired the union's president.

## **German journalists strike during collective bargaining negotiations**

German journalists held a three-day warning strike last week during the fourth round of collective bargaining negotiations with the Funke media group, according to the *Junge Welt*.

The paper also reported that the Journalists' Association and Verdi called a strike at broadcaster Norddeutscher Rundfunk, calling for a pay rise of 10.5 percent. Reportedly pay only increased by 4 percent since 2021, despite total inflation of 16.4 percent.

## **Transport workers strike over overtime and safety on the coast in Belgium**

Workers at the De Lijn, the transport company owned by the Flemish regional government in Belgium, held a strike in coastal regions on Wednesday. The unions and management did not agree over issues with understaffing, unpaid overtime and increasing incidents of violence against transport workers.

Minimum service laws meant 10 percent of trams along the coast ran during the strike, and bus cancellations were between 40 and 80 percent in different regions.

## **Municipal workers continue fight against dismissals in İzmir, Turkey**

Municipal workers in Karşıyaka and Kemalpaşa, in Turkey's İzmir Province, are fighting job losses made following the local elections in March.

According to *Evrensel*, 127 Kemalpaşa municipal workers protested on Wednesday outside the local headquarters of the Republican People's Party (CHP), whose newly elected mayor fired them, claiming economic reasons.

The newspaper also reported that 93 workers at Kent A?, a company which runs cafeterias in Karşıyaka, were fired for taking part in protests over late payment of wages. The Kent A? workers protested outside the local CHP offices, but the party claimed to know nothing about the sackings.

In İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, covering the city of İzmir, the Tüm Bel-Sen union signed a collective agreement this week, despite workers voting by 53 percent to reject it, *Evrensel* reported.

## **Security guards at job centres in England in further strikes over pay**

Security guards at job centres in England began a further two-week walkout on Monday over pay.

The 1,500 GMB and 200 PSC union members are employed by outsourced company G4S. They are striking to oppose being forced to do unpaid training in their own time. They are on the minimum wage of £11.44 an hour.

The GMB says the company is in breach of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which deems compulsory labour illegal.

GMB members held several previous stoppages in May, June and July. The 200 PCS members took part in joint action in June and July.

## **Drivers at South West Buses in Somerset, England walk out over pay and conditions**

UK drivers employed by First South West Buses, Somerset walked out on August 9 and 12 after a previous stoppage for 48 hours from July 23 over pay and conditions. An overtime ban is also in place.

The RMT union members complain about low pay and working on buses that break down.

RMT Assistant General Secretary, Eddie Dempsey, said the company's offer "proposed no new money into the contract," but "instead suggested members sell their terms and conditions to pay for their own pay rise, which is essentially moving money around."

First also put the offer to the workforce individually using a workplace app, in violation of collective bargaining.

The company is a subsidiary of the multinational FirstGroup, the UK's largest bus operator, which also runs buses in Ireland.

## **Healthcare assistants at several UK hospitals continue back pay strike over grading**

Several hundred UK healthcare assistants (HCAs) working for hospital trusts in Kettering, Leicester and Northampton are continuing a 26-day stoppage begun August 5 over back pay.

The Unison union members won their demand to be paid on band 3 level rather than the band 2 level they were on. Many were doing higher band tasks such as taking blood and inserting cannulas.

The dispute continues over back pay. The HCAs at Kettering, Leicester and Northampton are pushing for the same back pay date of 2018 won by HCAs at other hospital trusts.

Also on August 5, more than 350 nursing assistants at Surrey and Sussex Healthcare Trust began a three-day stoppage over the same issue.

Next week, porters, cleaners, caterers and other hospital staff plan to walk out Monday to Friday at East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trusts. The Unison members are in dispute over plans to outsource their jobs, which would threaten pay and conditions.

## **UK care assistants at St Helens retirement home begin stoppage over pay and conditions**

Care assistants at a retirement home for Pilkington Glass factory workers in St Helens, England walked out Monday and Tuesday. A further strike is planned on August 19-20.

The working conditions of the Unite union members have changed, involving administering drugs to residents without a pay uplift commensurate with the more responsible role. The company is offering a £500 one-off payment after undertaking drug training, plus a 4 percent pay rise.

Established in 1826, Pilkington merged with Japanese company NSG in 2006 to become one of the largest glass manufacturers in the world.

## **Death of nurse from overwork intensifies ongoing Iranian nurses' strike and protests**

Strikes by nurses in Shiraz and Karaj, Iran, begun last week, are continuing. The death of nurse Parvaneh Mandani, linked to "Karoshi syndrome" of death by overwork, has intensified the strikes and protests, which have now spread to hospitals in seven more cities.

By August 10, when the Shiraz nurses had been on strike for six days, the only nurses at work in the city's hospitals were providing emergency department cover. Strikes and protests were already spreading to other cities.

A statement reportedly issued by the Shiraz strikers stressed that their demands concerned all nurses in Iran. They called for correction and revision of nursing pay, the alignment of their salaries with those of nurses in other sectors, proper implementation of the nursing tariff law, restoration of abolished benefits and adjustment of the housing allowance in nursing contracts.

Last month, the ILNA news agency reported that nursing wages were less than half the poverty line because of the unfair implementation of tariffs.

The Shiraz nurses also called for the abolition of mandatory overtime, proper implementation of the productivity enhancement law, correct application of legislation recognising arduous work, which would allow nurses to retire after 20 years of service, and settlement of all outstanding financial dues.

Nurses across the country have also protested. On Saturday, healthcare workers accompanied by their children staged a protest outside Fasa University of Medical Sciences. Nurses and healthcare workers protested at the University of Medical Sciences in Zanjan against unfair payment of tariffs, benefits and overtime. Nurses also protested at Khomeini Hospital in Abadeh, in Fars province.

Strikes have begun at Imam Sajjad Hospital in Tabriz at the non-payment of tariffs, and at Lamerd, in Fars. On Monday, nurses at Behesht Taft Hospital in Yazd came out on strike.

*IranWire* report that authorities are trying to break the strike by deploying replacement nurses from Tehran in Shiraz on higher wages and with their airfare covered.

The death of 32-year-old Mandani, a nurse at Iman Hossein Hospital in Sepidan, has highlighted the conditions nurses confront. She reportedly died after accompanying three patients to a hospital in Shiraz. Karoshi syndrome describes sudden deaths caused by excessive work demands, resulting in heart attacks or strokes.

The number of nursing fatalities in Iran is rising because of the desperate shortage of nurses. According to *Tejarat News*, Iran has only one-tenth the level of nursing cover as Europe, and one-fifth that of neighbouring Azerbaijan. One nurse told press this meant "We have to cover 40 to 50 patients in each shift."

On top of the stresses of their work, nurses have also faced legal summons and threats for protesting. Around 60 nurses in Kerman were summonsed last month. Applications by nurses to migrate doubled in the period 2021-23.

## **West Bank protests against Israeli airstrike at Al Tabeen school**

Protesters in the occupied West Bank cities of Nablus and Ramallah demonstrated on Saturday at the Israeli airstrike on the Al Tabeen school in Gaza. Around 100 Palestinians were killed in the attack, which took place during morning prayers.

On Friday afternoon, Israeli Defence Force (IDF) troops "accidentally" shot and wounded a US-Filipino activist at a protest in the West Bank village of Beita. Amado Sison, from New Jersey, had been present with Filipinos 4 Justice to film and monitor the activity of the IDF.

The IDF “used riot dispersal means and fired live rounds in the air” to break up the “gathering,” according to the *Times of Israel*.

Sison was shot in the back of the right thigh as he ran for cover.

### **Nigerian police and army kill dozens of peaceful protesters and bystanders**

Nigerian security forces killed at least 21 demonstrators to put down a week of protests at the beginning of August against government policies and soaring living costs, according to Amnesty International.

The protests were organised on a nationwide basis using the #EndBadGovernance hashtag on social media and drawing inspiration from recent events in Kenya.

Amina Yusuf gave an emotional account of her five-year-old son Muhammad Sani’s last moments. He was standing in the doorway of his home in the northern city Kano when police opened fire and hit him. They were aiming live ammunition at protesters taking part in peaceful rallies against rising living costs. “I will never forgive the policeman who fired the shot that killed my child,” added the 37-year-old.

After the first week of August, Kaduna joined the list of state governments imposing a ban on the protests.

### **Production hit at Libyan oil field due to strike**

Production at El Sharara, one of the largest fields run by the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC), was much reduced by a “sit-in” strike by locals of the Fezzan region.

The oilfield stopped production in January 2024 because of similar actions by residents demanding improvement in their social and economic needs. The NOC’s head, Farhat Bengdara promised to meet the demands of the protesters. Seven months later they remained unfulfilled.

The El Sharara field normally produces about 300,000 barrels of oil per day. Before the NATO instigated civil war and murder of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Libya was one of the world’s main exporters of oil.

### **Security guards strike at benefits offices in Western Cape, South Africa**

Security guards at South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) offices in Western Cape went on strike Tuesday, resulting in closures across the province.

The workers’ dispute was with the security company appointed by SASSA, which administers social relief to South African citizens and asylum seekers. The government body was now in discussion with the employer to reach a resolution.

Security guards at Sakhile Ezweni Group contracted to work for SASSA struck in April over unpaid bonuses, uniforms, and salary delays.

### **South African construction workers strike over redundancies and pay**

Building workers went on strike August 2 at the Tritapax Construction Company, sub-contracted by Motheo Constuction Group to build a major road link in North West province, South Africa.

The Tritapax employees are protesting against Motheo over summary lay-offs and late salary payments.

### **Kenyan airline staff on go-slow as strike date nears**

Operations at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Kenya were delayed for hours as staff went on a go-slow on August 12.

Kenya Aviation Workers Union (KAWU) members are expecting to walk out from August 19. The strike is in response to a planned takeover of state-run JKIA by a private company identified as Adani Airport Holdings Ltd. Workers are also calling for the resignation of top officials of the Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) who appear to be supporting the takeover for their own reasons.



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