

National strike by delivery workers in “gig economy” in Greece against pay cuts; strikes and protests continue in Iran over plummeting living standards; protests in Johannesburg suburbs in South Africa over water shortages

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.

Gig economy delivery workers in Greece strike against pay cut

Delivery workers for gig economy platforms in Greece held a national strike on October 11, calling for a collective agreement to end their classification as self-employed. Workers also denounced pay cuts by the apps Wolt and e-food, both owned by giant multinationals.

According to *ef.syn*, around 800 delivery riders reportedly joined a motorcade protest, and 95 percent of workers for e-food and 85 percent of Wolt workers stopped work during the strike.

Firefighters continue strike over pay in Lisbon, Portugal

Firefighters in Lisbon have been on strike since October 1, demanding an “urgent” pay increase, as well as other improvements such as a risk bonus, early retirement and days off in compensation for working on public holidays. They are responding to emergencies but protesting and refusing other duties.

According to *Lusa*, hundreds of firefighters protested and briefly occupied the parliament building two weeks ago. On Tuesday, firefighters delivered a petition in support of their demands signed by 20,000 people to the government. Protests have also taken place in Porto and Braga.

The government said it would review firefighters’ pay in the first quarter of 2025, but the Workers’ Union of the Municipality of Lisbon told *Lusa* it was “just a declaration of intentions” and the strike would continue until the end of October.

Strike against sale of French drug company Sanofi subsidiary

Workers at all sites of the drug company Sanofi in France began a strike on Thursday, called after the announcement of the sale of a controlling stake in Sanofi subsidiary Opella to US private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier & Rice.

Opella, which produces paracetamol under the brand name Doliprane, employs around 1,700 workers in France.

The French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) called for Sanofi to retain the majority of Opella’s capital, according to *BFMTV*. Politicians and unions of the nominal left and the far-right National Rally all opposed the sale from the nationalist standpoint of “health sovereignty.” The unions have not raised the demand for nationalisation of the pharmaceutical company.

Workers at French video game studio Ubisoft strike against forced in-person working

More than 700 workers walked out on a three-day strike at the French video game studio Ubisoft from Tuesday, after the company announced it would require them to work in the office at least three days per week.

One game designer with four years at Ubisoft told *AFP*, “When I was hired, I was 100 percent teleworking and my activity completely allowed that.”

In February, workers at Ubisoft also held a strike over pay. They are still demanding an 8 percent pay rise.

Protest in Prato, Italy, after brutal assault on picketing workers

Around a thousand workers protested in the Italian city of Prato on Sunday, denouncing a brutal assault on picketing leather-making workers last week. The Sudd Cobas union said the victims of the attack were “fight[ing] for the right to work with dignity, 40 hours a week instead of 12 hours a day 7 days a week.”

According to *ANSA*, around 1.30am on October 9 four picketing workers were hospitalised in a mafia-style attack by a gang of five thugs

wielding metal clubs. The attackers reportedly said, “Next time we will shoot you.”

Bus drivers’ strike in northern Germany against revocation of collective agreement

Bus drivers in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein held a two-day strike last week to demand the reimplementation of their collective agreement.

According to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the agreement included pay rises linked to inflation, but the Omnibus Association North claimed to be unable to afford it and revoked the agreement.

This week, around 1,000 transport workers also joined a two-day warning strike in Baden-Württemberg. The strikes were called by the United Services Union (Verdi) for a 350 euro monthly pay rise and a 1,300-euro inflation compensation payment. The employers reportedly offered only 3 percent and a 600-euro bonus.

Sacked miners in Turkey begin hunger strike after 50 days of protests

On Monday, miners from Fernas Mining, who have been protesting since August against their dismissal, began a hunger strike, *Duvar* reported. Previous protests and a march to Ankara were met with arrests by the police.

Fernas is owned by Ferhat Nasıroğlu, an MP from the ruling Justice and Development Party. The company reportedly fired members of the Independent Mine Workers Union, and others were reportedly sacked for refusing to work in unsafe conditions.

An open letter in support of the Fernas miners was signed by 196 academics, *Evrensel* reported, and journalists set up a petition in support of the protests.

Strike over pay paralyzes Czech courts

Workers in courts in the Czech Republic held a three-day strike October 7-9 over pay. Strikers included clerks, secretaries, recorders and bailiffs, and the vast majority of hearings throughout the country were cancelled or postponed.

According to *iDNES*, court workers are calling for a 15 percent pay rise but expect they will be offered 7-8 percent. Although current inflation has fallen to 2.6 percent, the average price rise in 2023 was 10.7 percent.

iDNES reported that the Minister of Justice claimed the government could not afford a higher pay rise, as the Constitutional Court had ordered it to spend half a billion koruna reversing a cut in judge’s salaries in May.

Nurses strike against understaffing in Liège, Belgium

Nurses at ISoSL, a company owned by several municipalities in the Belgian province of Liège, held a 24-hour strike on Thursday to call for increased staffing levels and oppose what the General Union of Public

Services called “a desire on the part of general management to introduce pure and hard austerity.”

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions told *RTBF* that in ISoSL’s care homes, “one nurse sometimes has to manage 100 patients.” Around 4,000 workers are employed in care homes and clinics run by ISoSL.

Strikes at Dutch brick manufacturers over pay

Workers at brick factories in the Netherlands have been holding rolling 48-hour strikes during collective bargaining negotiations. The unions are calling for a pay rise of 4.75 percent plus 100 euros a month, and a lighter workload for older workers, the *Algemeen Dagblad* reported.

Strikes began in September with several 24-hour stoppages, and a series of 48-hour strikes began two weeks ago. Around 1,500 workers are employed in the brick-making sector.

Food production workers in Spalding, UK continue stoppage over pay

Around 700 UK food production workers employed by Bakkavor at their plant in Spalding, Lincolnshire are continuing their stoppage begun September 27.

The walkout comes after the Unite union members overwhelmingly rejected a 6 percent pay rise offer made in May, with over 92 percent voting to strike. Unite represents about half the workforce at the site and the action is expected to impact supplies of food products and cause nationwide shortages. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham visited the picket line Wednesday.

Bakkavor produces food products such as bread, desserts, pizzas and salads for UK supermarket chains including Marks & Spencer, Tesco and Waitrose.

Food production workers in Wrexham, Wales extend strike over fire and rehire threat

Around 500 striking workers in food production at Oscar Mayer in Wrexham, Wales have extended their stoppage by a further two weeks. The action, begun September 12, was scheduled to end October 10.

The Unite union members oppose the elimination or reduction of some breaks and enhanced payments and time off in lieu of working bank holidays. If the changes are not accepted, management threatened to fire and rehire on pay reduced by £3,000.

Oscar Mayer supplies ready meals to Tesco, Asda, Greggs, Waitrose, Aldi, the Co-op and Sainsbury’s.

For many of the workers English is a second language, and some were dismissed after misunderstanding the notice period deadline for accepting the changes. Unite is pursuing legal action on the grounds of unfair dismissal. According to Unite, the claims could be worth around £3 million.

Unite also reported the Job&Talent employment agency had advertised for temporary staff at Oscar Mayer during the course of the strike.

Further strikes scheduled by tea packaging workers in Stockton, England over poverty pay

Around 150 UK workers, mainly women, employed at Tetley Tea's packaging factory in Eaglescliffe near Stockton held a fourth strike day on October 10. They began their action September 20, and 12 more stoppages are planned. Tetley Tea is owned by Tata Consumer Products.

The GMB union members rejected a 4.4 percent pay offer this year following last year's 7 percent rise. Announcing the first ever strike at Tetley, the GMB noted, "This loyal, predominately female workforce has endured year after year of real terms pay cuts. Now they have had enough."

Housing repair and maintenance staff at London UK borough begin indefinite strike over pay

Housing repair and maintenance staff working for Labour-run Haringey council in London began an indefinite stoppage Tuesday.

The Unite union members are protesting not having had a pay rise for more than 10 years. The intervening cost of living crisis and inflation levels mean they are around £6,000 worse off in real terms.

The workers have taken intermittent strike action since September 2023 to try and resolve the matter, but to no avail.

Strike by refuse workers in Sheffield, England continues

UK refuse collection workers in Sheffield are continuing their all-out strike, begun August 20. The stoppage by around 100 Unite union members at the Lumley Street depot followed a week-long strike from July 29.

They are protesting the company's refusal to recognise Unite for collective bargaining, despite the union representing 80 percent of the workforce.

Veolia, under contract to Sheffield City Council for refuse collection, recognises the GMB union. It disputes Unite's 80 percent figure, saying it is only 47 percent. Veolia reaches this figure by including depots outside Sheffield in its count.

During the near two-month stoppage Veolia has sought to isolate the Lumley Street workers by transferring all other staff, like administration staff, to a site in Barnsley. It has also employed agency workers on the same contracts as permanent workers to try to break the strike. Three strikers have been sacked during the dispute. The strikers are demanding their reinstatement.

Unite has a national bargaining agreement with Veolia across numerous depots throughout the UK. The union is currently in direct negotiations with Veolia representatives at its UK headquarters.

Veolia is also attempting to break the strike by using workers normally based in Barnsley. The GMB union is not opposing this.

Further stoppages announced by workers at UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office in Scotland over pay and conditions

Eleven catering and cleaning staff employed by outsourcing company OCS at the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office at Abercrombie House in East Kilbride, Scotland walked out again on Tuesday and Thursday, bringing the number of strike days to 11.

The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members want a pay increase, an increase in leave and a company sick pay scheme. They have held stoppages since September.

Further walkouts are scheduled for October 22 and 24, October 29-31, November 5-7, 12, 14, 19-21 and 26-28.

Nuclear power site maintenance staff at Sellafield, UK walk out over pay

Around a dozen workers employed by Altrad Services at the Fellfield site in England were on strike from October 10 until Tuesday. They are due to walk out again Thursday until October 22, and again October 24-29.

The Unite union members accuse Altrad of reneging on a planned pay rise of 11.3 percent by paying only 7.3 percent.

The workers provide access and maintenance to the Fellfield site which produces steam for the adjacent Sellafield nuclear site.

Mental health staff in Manchester, England walk out over staffing and funding levels

Around 35 mental health workers employed in the Early Intervention Psychosis teams across Greater Manchester held a 24-hour stoppage on Wednesday.

The Unite and Unison union members are employed by the Greater Manchester Health NHS Foundation Trust. They provide early intervention support to those with serious mental health issues. They walked out to highlight staff shortages and underfunding, leading to excessive workloads, harming patient care.

School support staff at London school strike over restructuring proposals

Dozens of school support staff, including teaching assistants and inclusion workers, at the Mulgrave Primary School in Greenwich in the UK capital began a three-day stoppage Wednesday.

The Unite, Unison and GMB members oppose a planned restructure which would lead to the loss of 14 jobs and cut the pay and scrap flexible working for the remaining staff.

Further strikes by hundreds of hospital ancillary staff at three hospitals in east England against privatisation plans

Hundreds of UK ancillary staff at Colchester Hospital, Ipswich Hospital and Aldeburgh Community Hospital are to strike on Saturday, followed by a 48-hour stoppage due to begin Monday. The hospitals are run by the

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT).

The Unison union members, who work as caterers, cleaners, housekeepers and porters, are protesting plans by ESNEFT to privatise the ancillary services they provide. A final decision on the privatisation plans is due November.

The workers have held 13 days of stoppages since beginning action in August. Unison accused the trust of drafting in strike-breakers from as far away as Newcastle during that stoppage. It said the trust accommodated them in hotels and bussed them to the hospital sites, paying them £27 an hour on the night shift and £17 on the day shift.

Ancillary staff working for ESNEFT at Ipswich Hospital are already employed by private contractor OCS on inferior conditions. They have less annual leave and lower sick pay than directly employed NHS staff.

Strikers will hold a march Saturday from Colchester Hospital to Castle Park.

Gas supply engineers at UK company to strike over pay

Around 150 gas engineers employed by TVS Supply Chain Solutions under contract to British Gas are set to walk out on Friday until October 21, and again October 25-28.

The GMB union members are based at the company's sites in Leicester and Coventry. They voted by a 90 percent majority for the stoppage, rejecting the company's inadequate pay offer. Negotiations over 10 months failed to resolve the issue of pay. They have endured a three-year pay freeze.

Strike by special needs staff in the Wirral, England over pay and workloads

UK staff supporting children with special needs working for Wirral Council SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) team walked out on Wednesday.

The National Education Union (NEU) members based in the Mallory Building in Birkenhead are protesting the service being understaffed and under-resourced. NEU regional official Bora Oktas told *BBC News* that meeting the statutory 20-week delivery deadline for an education and health and care plan was "totally unachievable" in current circumstances.

Wirral Council says it is in the process of restructuring its SEND service with an additional investment of £1.2 million this year and £2.8 million next year.

Further stoppages are planned for October 22, 24 and 29-31.

Protest by Uber drivers in Glasgow, Scotland over falling pay

Uber drivers held a protest Tuesday in Glasgow, Scotland, accusing the taxi-hailing app company of taking an unfair slice of the fare payment. The protest took place outside the company's hub in the city.

The GMB members were demanding increased pay and improved working conditions. A GMB survey revealed 80 percent of Uber drivers earn less than a year ago. Speaking to *BBC News*, a GMB representative said, "Everything went up and our income shrank."

Further widespread protests across Iran over collapse in living standards

Monday saw widespread protests by Iran Telecommunications Company pensioners in cities across Iran, including Ahvaz, Isfahan, Rasht, Shiraz and Tabriz.

In Tehran, protestors gathered outside the Telecommunications Company headquarters. They were protesting the inadequacy of the pensions, for improved health care and living conditions. In Kermanshah, protestors chanted that the monthly pension only covers one week's living costs.

The previous day saw protests by literacy teachers in Tehran demanding full employment status. Also in Tehran, around 5,000 retired teachers protested in front of the Budget and Planning Organisation over unpaid benefits.

That day, taxi drivers in Kashan working for the Wireless Taxi Service 133 demonstrated over incomes falling as fuel prices rise. Workers at the Lamerd Cement Company in Fars Province held a protest over delayed wages. In Qarzin, people who had invested in housing projects gathered in front of government offices to protest the failure of the schemes to deliver homes and leaving them financially stretched.

The situation, exacerbated by US sanctions, is worsening as the US and Israel escalate war preparations against Iran.

Further protests by Iranian oil workers over pay and conditions

On Monday, permanently employed (formal) oil workers in the South Pars complex in Iran held a further protest in their series of "protest Mondays."

The protests are to demands removal of the salary cap, removal of the limit of the number of employment years that count towards pensions, and payment of back pay.

The following day saw protests by casual oil workers in the seventh to twelfth refineries at the South Pars complex. They stopped work, holding rallies to push their demands for improvements to pay and conditions. Their action was supported by some permanent oil workers, who refused to issue necessary permits, bringing production to a halt.

Ongoing protests in Iraq over failure to employ medical graduates

In Iraq, around 27,000 medical and health graduates from the 2023 cohort have still not been employed. Under Iraqi law, all medical graduates are supposed to be offered employment.

They have staged regular protests over this issue, the latest being October 6 in Baghdad. Hundreds rallied in front of the Ministry of Health building. A September protest by healthcare professionals awaiting employment positions was confronted by security forces, leading to 25 being injured.

Demonstrators in South Africa block roads to protest water stoppages

Residents of two suburbs of Johannesburg, South Africa blocked roads

with burning tyres and other debris Wednesday to protest nationwide water shortages and local stoppages.

South Africa has an ongoing water crisis and has still not recovered from droughts going back to 2015. The government is accused of misappropriation of funds for investment in water infrastructure, not addressing sewage and commercial pollution issues and not tackling avoidable water losses—41 percent of water produced in the country is lost before it reaches the user.

Unpaid film crew and actors stop production of popular South African TV series

Cast and crew of the South African four-times weekly fantasy drama serial *Queendom* have been on strike over pay since October 2. They first stopped work in July for almost two months over non-payment of salaries. The production company has blamed their funders.

University teachers in Ghana walk out on national strike

University teachers began an indefinite strike to demand a nationwide ban on all mining and prospecting activities in protected areas, forests, farmlands, or wetlands. Illegal mining, known as galamsey has been an increasing problem.

The University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) members voted overwhelmingly to strike in a referendum held October 9. A total of 2,153 members (78 percent) voted in favour, while 607 (22 percent) voted against.

Sacked Nigerian Mobil oil workers protest unpaid severance payments

Around 100 sacked Nigerian former Mobil workers held a protest at the gate of the Mobil Housing Estate in Akwa Ebom State in mid-October to demand their unpaid severance payments. Their slogans included, “Stop the Abuse of Human/Labour Rights in Nigeria Now!”

Protest leader, Moses Mbong explained that Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited sacked 2,390 janitorial and catering service workers between 2007 and 2017 without paying them the severance payments they were entitled to.

Nigerian union calls for government intervention in strike by Food and Drug control workers

Workers employed by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control in Nigeria have been on indefinite strike since October 8 over lack of promotion and other issues.

On October 14, leaders of the Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporations and Government-Owned Companies union leaders called on the government to intervene in the strike on the grounds it was a risk to public health and a cause of congestion at the ports.

Labour court tries to break Kenyan health workers’ strike in Meru County

Striking health workers in Meru County, Kenya downed tools to protest staff shortages and delays in getting promotions.

On October 12, when the strike had lasted for 39 days, the Employment and Labour Relations Court in Meru declared the strike by the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union members illegal. The judge ruled that the county administration was not at fault in its poor treatment of its staff.

Police and troops move into school in Uganda after strike over dance ban

Students at the Ishaka Adventist College in Bushenyi Ishaka municipality in Uganda walked out to protest the school authorities’ refusal to allow them to celebrate Ugandan independence by holding a dance, as they have in previous years.

Police claimed property had been destroyed, including smashed dormitory window glass, vandalised school classrooms and vehicles. They said police and the army moved in to prevent further damage and “will be there until further notice.”



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