

National one-day pay strike in Germany's auto industry; protests against plummeting living standards continue across Iran; healthcare workers in Nigeria walk out over pay and conditions

## Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

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### **Thousands of metal and engineering workers in Germany's auto industry strike for pay rises**

Around 71,000 German metal and electrical engineering workers at Porsche, BMW, Mercedes and 370 other companies went on a national strike Tuesday to push for higher wages.

The IG Metall union members, part of a four-million strong workforce in the industry, want a 7 percent pay increase while the employers' associations are offering 3.6 percent over 27 months. Workers at a Volkswagen factory also walked out over closure concerns.

Car workers globally face a jobs massacre as part of the transition to electric vehicles, as companies compete to offset the cost of investment through job losses and lower wages.

### **Valeo car parts workers in France strike to protest possible job losses**

Around 270 factory workers at the multi-national giant car parts manufacturing firm Valeo's factory in Suze-sur-Sarthe, France went on unlimited strike October 21. Workers fear potential redundancies at the factory and two others in the north west France region.

The firm, which mainly supplies battery coolers to Stellantis, has been looking to sell since July.

The General Confederation of Labour members decided to take action after a decision on the possible company's closure was postponed for another month.

### **Strike by administrative staff at UK's Ford car manufacturer over pay**

Around 1,000 administrative staff at auto manufacturer Ford's UK sites

at Dunton in Essex, Stratford and Dagenham in east London, Daventry in Northamptonshire and Halewood on Merseyside held a one-day stoppage Wednesday.

The Unite union members are seeking a permanent pay rise after rejecting Ford's one-off payment offer for 2024 and linking pay for 2025 to performance. They oppose Ford's plans to dilute sick pay and renegotiate its collective agreement with Unite.

The staff have taken action short of striking since August 22 in the dispute.

### **Car parts manufacturing workers in Llanelli, Wales walk out over low pay**

Around 200 workers employed by Llanelli Gestamp, in Llanelli, Wales began a two-week walkout Monday.

The Unite union members who make car parts for major car manufacturers such as Nissan, BMW, JLR, Aston Martin and INEOS are protesting low pay. Many of them only earn the national minimum wage, currently £11.44 an hour. They rejected a pay rise from the company as too small. They are seeking parity with Gestamp workers in County Durham, who are set to earn £13.77 an hour from January.

The Spanish based company had revenues of over €12 billion in 2023, with profits of €1.4 billion.

### **Seasonal firefighters from across Greece demonstrate for permanent employment as part of countrywide strike upsurge**

An estimated 2,500 seasonal firefighters from across Greece demonstrated for 48 hours Wednesday outside the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection in Athens. They demanded the government fill 4,000 unfilled vacancies and give them 12 months permanent employment each year.

The firefighters say that every October they are left unemployed after being overworked for the whole high season and then the fire service is left dangerously understaffed the rest of the year.

The firefighters' struggle is part of the broader austerity driven

movement building towards a general strike on November 20 against Kiriakos Mitsotakis's New Democracy government. This includes strikes by seamen, teachers, food and tourism workers, doctors and healthcare workers.

### **Spanish bus drivers strike nationwide for earlier retirement**

Thousands of bus drivers across all regions of Spain walked out Monday to demand special early retirement for workers in the industry due to the stress and danger involved in driving.

The General Union of Workers and Workers Commissions members want the same retirements benefits as other workers engaged in risky employment, such as miners, marine workers and freight drivers, and plan further action through November and December.

### **Thousands of teachers demonstrate in Pamplona, Spain for improved pay and conditions**

An estimated 4,000 teachers gathered from across the province of Navarra, Spain to march in Pamplona Tuesday to protest poor working conditions.

The teachers, members of many different unions, assembled outside the Department of Education of the provincial government demanding better pupil- staff ratios and improved salaries. According to Europa Press, one banner stated, "We create smiles with laughable wages".

### **Housing repair staff at West Midlands social housing provider in England strike over pay**

Around 200 staff working for social housing provider Citizen Housing in the West Midlands, England walked out on Monday.

The Unite union members who are employed as administration staff, builders, electricians and gas engineers rejected a 4 percent pay offer from Citizen Housing. They provide a service to around 30,000 households across an area including Birmingham, Coventry, Hereford and Worcester.

Further stoppages are planned for November 1, 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25 and 29.

### **Continuing protests and strikes across Iran as living standards plummet**

Monday saw further protests by retirees of the Telecommunications Company of Iran over their inadequate pensions. Protests took place in Ahvaz, Bijar, Ilam, Isfahan, Sanandaj, Tabriz, Tehran and Zanjan.

The protests by the telecom retirees in Ilam were joined by municipal workers, who have not been paid for several months.

Students at Tehran University's Faculty of Social Sciences held a protest against increasing commercialisation of university facilities, attempts to separate students on the basis of gender and attacks on student political activities. They chanted, "No to a militarized university".

On Tuesday, family members of prisoners on death row gathered outside the parliament building opposing the death sentence. They chanted "Don't execute".

The same day saw protests by disabled people in Chabahar and Tehran. Among their demands were for back payment of care allowances outstanding, support benefits and for the implementation of financial assistance in line with welfare legislation.

Also, South Pars Gas Company oil contract workers in Bushehr walked out, holding a further "Tuesday Protest" to demand increased pay and safer working conditions.

The collapse in living conditions, exacerbated by US sanctions, is worsening as the US and Israel escalate war preparations against Iran.

### **Health workers in Nigeria hold seven-day strike over unpaid allowances and welfare issues**

Nigerian health workers began a seven-day "warning" strike on October 25.

Workers in five unions comprising the Joint Health Sector Unions and the Healthcare Assembly of Professionals are demanding payment of outstanding COVID-19 allowances, tax waivers on allowances, payment of the outstanding 25 percent review arrears, payment of regulatory agency staff (owed nine months' salary arrears) and other issues.

The unions gave the federal government a 15-day ultimatum before calling the strike but received no official response.

On April 28, Muhammad Pate, the Minister of Health and Social Welfare promised to initiate a process to adjust the Consolidated Health Salary Structure, which is part of the health workers' demands, but the government has done nothing since.

### **University staff in Nigeria begin indefinite strike over unpaid salaries**

A strike by Nigerian university staff begun October 28 brought many universities to a halt, especially those run by the federal government.

The Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and the Non-academic Staff Union of Educational and Allied Institutions members walked out after the government's failure to pay four months outstanding salaries, breaking the terms of an agreement made on August 20, 2022.

Branch Chairman of SSANU at the University of Lagos, Olugbenga Adenaiya said, "Remember that we went on strike early this year and it was suspended because the government promised to pay us the withheld salaries, but that has not been the case."

Poor pay and conditions has led to a growing exodus of health professionals from Nigeria.

### **Staff at University of Bahr el-Ghazal in South Sudan continue their strike**

Both academic and non-academic staff at the University of Bahr el-Ghazal in South Sudan began a stoppage October 14 to demand 11 months of unpaid dues, allowances and medical arrears.

Since then, the authorities paid only one month of arrears. The

chairperson of the University Academic Staff, Joseph Lual Dario, said, “We are still demanding our salaries for 10 months. The one-month pay will not do much for us as we have many debts and bills to pay.”

South Sudan's crude oil export revenue has fallen since the conflict in 2013 to 2018. Recently, its economy has been hit by export disruptions due to the war in its larger neighbour Sudan.

### **Pay strike at Mister Sweet in Germiston South Africa continues**

A strike at Mister Sweet in Germiston, South Africa has entered its 11th week.

Around 385 out of 602 employees walked out in August. The Simunye Workers Forum (SWF) members rejected a 7 percent pay offer negotiated by the United Chemical Industries Mining Electrical State Health and Allied Workers Union. They are demanding R,12,500 a month and R16,500 for higher level staff. Owner Premier Foods refuses to recognise the SWF, a new union.

To break the strike, the company is employing unqualified casuals, four of whom lost fingers in what is a hazardous occupation. It also instructed 150 strikers back, to work at another plant in Manhattan.

Premier's revenue grew 3.6 percent last year, from R17.9 billion to R18.6 billion in March.

### **Defence workers' picket at Denel headquarters in South Africa for wage rise**

Workers at Denel, South Africa's largest defence manufacturer, picketed head office in Centurion October 24.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa members, whose pay rose by only 4 percent the past five years are demanding a 15 percent increase. During this period food prices rose 68 percent. Workers also want R5,000 relocation grant and the company's contribution to the pension fund reinstated.

According to NUMSA, the government is running down the company, which is teetering on bankruptcy due to corruption and mismanagement to make ready for its privatisation.



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