

Hundreds of public sector workers and fast food delivery drivers in Athens, Greece strike over pay; protests by telecommunications and teaching retirees in Iran as oil and petrochemical workers at two companies walk out; phosphate workers' stoppage in Tunisia over pay and conditions

## 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.*

### **Hundreds of workers in Athens, Greece strike and demonstrate for more pay and improved living conditions**

Hundreds of municipal workers, public servants and private sector workers took part in a 24-hour work stoppage December 20 and marched in protest through Athens to the parliament building.

The General Confederation of Greek Workers union members were supported by pensioners and the unemployed to demand higher wages, better working conditions and measures to address the cost-of-living crisis.

### **Fast food delivery riders in Athens, Greece strike for better pay and improved working conditions**

Hundreds of motorcycle couriers at efood, an online takeaway delivery firm in the Attica region of Greece, went on a 24-hour strike Saturday and drove via motorcade through Athens to protest at the company headquarters.

The delivery workers demand a collective agreement for wage increases, direct employment with the firm rather than through subcontractors, accident insurance, personal protective equipment and many other health and safety measures.

### **Thousands of workers in Northern Cyprus strike and demonstrate against proposed new pay laws**

Thousands of workers held a two-day general strike in Turkish-administered Northern Cyprus December 26, marching to the parliament building in Nicosia and tearing down the gates.

The members of 33 different unions accuse the government of corruption and protest two proposed bills, one of which will reduce cost-of-living allowances and another giving the government a final veto in collective bargaining agreements. They threaten an indefinite strike if the bills are passed into law.

### **French air traffic controllers strike over pay and conditions**

Air traffic controllers at French airports in Lyon, Ajaccio and Montpellier caused flight delays and cancellations when they stopped work December 17 to protest failed negotiations around pay and working conditions.

The National Syndicate of Air Traffic Controllers members intend further strikes if their demands are not met.

### **Municipal workers and hotel workers in Portugal strike over the holiday period for better working conditions and pay**

Hundreds of waste collection workers in Lisbon, Portugal went on an overtime ban and held a two-day stoppage December 26. The Lisbon Municipal Workers' Union members are protesting staff shortages, inoperative collection vehicles and poor working conditions.

Hotel workers in Madeira began a three-day strike Sunday and protested in Funchal. The Madeira Hotel Workers Union members marched to the Regional Secretariat for Economy, Tourism and Culture to demand salary increases commensurate with the profits they make for the tourist industry.

## **Walkout by train managers at UK rail company over pay for working rest days**

Around 400 UK train managers at the Avanti West Coast train operating company walked out Tuesday and Thursday in a dispute over payments for working rest days. The managers traditionally performed the role of conductors/guards but now also manage the team of staff on a train service.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union members planned to strike on December 22, 23 and 29. The walkouts were suspended after Avanti put forward a new proposal to settle the dispute. The increased offer, however, was rejected by an 83 percent majority.

The managers originally voted by nearly 93 percent to reject Avanti's pay proposals for working rest days. They normally work a 41-hour week but due to staff shortages are being asked to work rest days.

The train managers want enhanced pay for working rest days in line with senior managers, who are paid £300 or more for working on their designated rest days.

Avanti runs services covering the west coast including between Euston station in London to Glasgow in Scotland. As a result of the walkout, Avanti ran a reduced service and within limited hours.

## **Strikes by parking wardens in four London boroughs over pay and conditions**

Around 200 wardens employed to enforce parking restrictions in the London boroughs of Kingston, Lambeth, Richmond and Wandsworth were on strike December 23 and 24.

The GMB members, employed by outsourcing company Apcoa on behalf of the four borough councils, are demanding a pay rise and improved working conditions. They previously held a week-long stoppage in November over the same issue.

German-based Apcoa operates in over 10 countries across Europe with more than 4,000 employees providing parking services. It has an annual revenue of around €900 million. It was acquired by equity firm SVP Global in 2024.

## **Continuing protests in Iran as economic conditions deteriorate**

Monday saw ongoing protests by Telecommunications Company of Iran retirees across the country, including in Ahvaz, Ilam, Kermanshah, Rasht and Sanandaj. They were calling for improved pensions and healthcare as well as payment of overdue benefits.

In Birjand, Sanandaj and Zanjan, retired teachers protested, calling for increased pensions and payment of arrears.

In Ilam, employees of the Arghavan Gostar Petrochemical Company protested against being laid off. Monday marked the sixth day of strikes by workers at the Iran Ofogh company in the Yadavarn oil field. They are demanding improved pay and working conditions.

In Tehran, customers defrauded by a state-backed car company rallied outside the court where the company is on trial over financial mismanagement.

In Chabahar, security forces forcibly dispersed the stalls of marginalised street vendors trying to seek a living.

Sunday saw protests by merchants in Tehran's Grand Bazaar. Starting

with stalls in the shoe market, it spread to fabric sellers and then more widely. They protested rising inflation and a runaway increase in the dollar exchange rate, which is making trading increasingly difficult. Protests by the Tehran bazaar merchants have historically played a significant role in wider social upheavals.

With inflation at 31.7 percent and the poverty rate around 30 percent, living standards, badly hit by US sanctions, will deteriorate further as NATO escalates its war plans against Iran.

## **Labour dispute declared at major Israeli telecoms company**

On December 25, the chair of Israel's union for cellular, internet and high-tech workers declared a dispute at Partner Communications.

Partner communications is one of Israel's largest telecommunications companies. Its 2,500 workers are demanding it stops delaying signing a new collective agreement. They are also protesting harassment of their union leadership and one-sided management decision making.

## **Phosphate workers walk out in Tunisia over pay and conditions**

Workers in the phosphate sector in the Gafsa mining basin in Tunisia walked out December 25 for two days over pay and conditions.

The participation rate of the Tunisian General Labour Union members was 96 percent. Workers want pay brought in line with inflation, running at 6.6 percent in November.

The Gafsa Phosphate Company is state-owned. Tunisia holds vast phosphate reserves, a mineral with many uses, for example in the production of fertilisers, electronics, steel, and in life science laboratories.

## **South African bus workers in Mahikeng without pay over Christmas protest unpaid wages**

In the seven days leading up to Christmas, South African bus workers protested over pay in Mahikeng with an encampment.

The 1,100 SAWU-YA-BASHUMI members at state-run North West Transport Investment have not been paid for five months. The North West provincial government approved R75 million to cover the backpay, but the Department of Transport has not released the funds, saying the company is undergoing a rescue operation. The department won the removal of the Business Rescue Practitioner (BRP) at the North Gauteng High Court, but the BRP plans to appeal the ruling.

Without wages, workers cannot send their children to school, buy medication or pay university fees.

## **Teachers in Mozambique boycott exams to demand unpaid overtime pay**

Around 2,000 teachers in primary and secondary schools in Mozambique boycotted final exams in December to demand payment of overtime, owed over three years. Around 35,000 students and 100 schools

were affected.

The National Association of Teachers members say the government only pays overtime sporadically, if ever.



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