

Thousands of call centre workers in Greece on strike over pay and conditions; general strike in West Bank city of Jenin against Israeli army murders; national strike by health workers in Morocco over pay, conditions and pensions

## 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.*

### Thousands of exploited Greek teleworkers strike for decent pay and working conditions

An estimated 12,000 call centre workers employed in Greece by French multinational Teleperformance are on strike for better salaries, reduced hours, improved work conditions and permanent contracts.

The workers set up the SETEP union themselves to address the exploitation experienced by teleworkers throughout Greece. They have been in dispute with the employer since early last year.

They demand a collective labour contract to protect workers' rights, particularly immigrant workers, who are housed in expensive accommodation and their utilities provided by Teleperformance, with costs deducted directly from already low wages. Many employees report bullying, threats and harassment to pressure them into meeting impossible targets.

Teleperformance provides customer services to companies such as Netflix, Google, Microsoft and Apple that generate massive profits.

### Car part workers in Izmir, Turkey continue strike for real terms pay rise and health and safety improvements

Factory workers at Basic Gasket, a car parts manufacturer in Izmir, Turkey have been on strike for 43 days to demand improved wages, better working conditions and union recognition.

The Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK) members say conditions in the engineering factory are affecting their health and safety. Management refuses to pay them more than the minimum wage.

The minimum wage in Turkey is slightly above the starvation threshold of 20,652 liras and well below the poverty threshold of 66,976 liras for a family of four, as calculated by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk-??) in November 2024.

### Belgian refuse workers at Veolia strike in protest at working conditions

Waste collection operatives employed by private company Veolia at two municipalities in Liège, Belgium walked out December 17 after a driver was pressured to work even though complaining of chest pains. He subsequently suffered a heart attack.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions members say work conditions have become intolerable since routes were modified under new efficiency procedures.

### Educational support workers in France strike for better pay and conditions

Hundreds of French educational support assistants (AESH) for disabled pupils took part in a national strike January 16, demonstrating at rallies in towns as far apart as Avignon, Auxerre, Calvados, Le Mans and Picardy. They were protesting understaffing, low wages and lack of recognition for their work.

The Federation of Trade Unions of the French Civil service, the General Confederation of Labour and other union members are demanding to be given status as professionals, including a re-evaluation of their salaries. Many of them work part-time less than 24 hours a week during school times, are unable to supplement their income with other employment and can end up earning less than the statutory minimum wage.

### Further strikes by teachers at UK sixth form colleges over pay

Around 2,000 teachers at 32 non-academised sixth form colleges across England are to hold a further three-day walkout after rejecting a 3.5 percent pay offer.

The NEU members are demanding a 5.5 percent pay rise in line with that paid to academised sixth form teachers. They have already held seven

strike days over the issue. The further dates are January 29 and February 6-7.

Colleges taking part in the walkouts include Bolton Sixth Form College, Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College, Greenhead College (Huddersfield), Hills Road Sixth Form College (Cambridge), Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College (Birmingham), Leyton Sixth Form College, Luton Sixth Form College, and WQE and Regent College Group (Leicester)

### **Further strikes by bus workers at UK's First Bus Hampshire over pay**

Around 140 UK drivers and supervisors working for First Bus Hampshire and Dorset, who took strike action in December, are holding further stoppages.

The Unite union members rejected a 4 percent pay offer from First Bus. They are based at the Hoeford depot, which runs bus services to Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth and Southampton.

After striking Saturday and Sunday they plan to walk out over the next five weekends and then February 25-27.

In 2023, First Hampshire and Dorset had a near £37 million turnover.

### **Teachers at London high school walk out over excessive workloads and bullying**

Teachers at Wanstead High School in east London walked out Tuesday until Thursday.

The stoppages are part of seven days of strikes held throughout January by the National Education Union (NEU) members. The programme of action began on January 8.

The teaching staff have a raft of grievances, including excessive hours and workloads. In addition, teaching assistants and support staff only get unpaid breaks. Another issue is staff being undermined in front of pupils by senior management.

Staff accuse the head teacher of using inflammatory language to prejudice parents against the strikers. This resulted in some parents holding a counter protest Tuesday in opposition to the stoppage.

Local online news outlet *Yellow Advertiser* quoted a letter to parents from the NEU. The NEU stated, "Last year, more than 20 staff members left the school, including three newly qualified teachers citing poor mental health and work-related stress."

The article noted, "According to the NEU's lengthy list of demands, staff are currently working more than 100 hours over their 'directed time budget' for each academic year."

In December, NEU members at the school voted by a 94 percent majority for the stoppages.

Middle East

### **General strike in West Bank city of Jenin in protest at Israeli army killings**

A general strike took place in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on January 15. Streets were empty as all shops obeyed the call to close. The

strike was called to protest the killing of 10 Palestinians and 40 wounded in the Jenin refugee camp by Israeli forces the previous day.

Since US President Donald Trump was inaugurated, and the ceasefire in Gaza implemented, the White House has indicated a new phase in the US-Israeli ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. This includes the relocation of the people of Gaza, possibly to Indonesia, and annexation of the West Bank.

### **Continuing protests in Iran against impact of ongoing economic crisis**

Sunday saw protests across Iran by pensioners in the cities of Ahvaz, Hapt-Tappeh, Shush and Tehran. They were protesting the low level of pensions, which amount to only around a third of the poverty level while healthcare costs soar.

On Monday, retired teachers held a protest outside the Ministry of Education offices in Tehran. They blocked the street demanding the promised payment of bonuses, which have been delayed by 17 months. Security forces used pepper spray to try and disperse the protestors.

Solidarity protests by retired teachers took place in Ilam, Kermanshah and Lorestan.

Protests also took place that day by telecom retirees in around 14 cities, including Ahvaz, Ilam, Isfahan, Rasht and Tehran. They demanded overdue payments and accused the Telecommunications Company of Iran of systematic corruption in the administration of their pensions.

Workers at the Chooka Wood and Paper Company in Rezvanshahr held their third demonstration in two weeks. They were protesting several months of wages arrears.

Inflation in Iran stands at 31.7 percent and the poverty rate is around 30 percent. Living standards, destroyed by US sanctions, will deteriorate further as the Trump administration continues Biden's war plans against Iran.

### **Strikes announced by Lebanese educators over unpaid allowances**

Lebanese educators in schools and technical institutes are to walk out Thursday and Friday.

The unions involved called the stoppages after the delay in payment of a productivity allowance agreed by the Education Ministry.

Lebanese workers face soaring inflation and mass poverty, exacerbated by Israel's recent attacks on the country. The country's wealth has been looted by the handful of billionaires that have run Lebanon since the end of the civil war in 1990.

### **Health workers strike in Morocco over government failure to improve pay, conditions and funding**

State-employed health workers throughout Morocco held a national strike on January 15 over the government's failure to honour commitments to improve pay and conditions made in July 2023. The strike affected all healthcare institutions other than emergency and intensive care units.

The Independent Union of Public Sector Doctors announced strikes and protests on January 21-22 and January 28-30.

On January 19, a protest was also called in the capital, Rabat, by the Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT) in opposition to new laws

limiting the right to strike. It brought together workers from various sectors, including educators and health workers. The march filled the streets from Bab El Had to the Moroccan Parliament.

### **Doctors walk out on three-day strike in Abuja, Nigeria**

Doctors in Abuja, Nigeria began a three-day strike on January 22 over unpaid salaries and allowances, and other grievances. All the main state-run hospitals in the capital came to a standstill.

The President of Association of Resident Doctors, Federal Capital Territory Administration, Dr George Ebong said the strike followed a three-week ultimatum issued last year. He highlighted the neglect of hospitals and of doctors' welfare in Abuja.

### **Striking Kenyan clinicians told to return to work by union**

A strike of clinical officers in Kenya on January 20 was called off by the Kenya Union of Clinical Officers (KUCO) within hours of its commencement.

The strike was over longstanding and unresolved issues, including salary harmonisation, medical cover, inadequate recruitment, and the absorption of temporary staff into permanent positions.

KUCO leaders said the strike was suspended for 21 days, citing "progress" they had made in negotiations with management.

### **Bidvest container workers at the Port of Durban, South Africa strike to defend jobs**

Workers at the Durban office of Bidvest South African Container Depot began an indefinite walkout January 16 in defence of their jobs, after being served with letters of dismissal.

The company, which employs 294 workers, provides management services for cargo and containers at ports. In September, it informed the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) that 106 workers would lose their jobs.

NUMSA said Bidvest had already begun to outsource the work after citing loss of business due to competition.



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