

Police disperse big protest in Morocco

# 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.

## Police disperse big protest in Morocco

Police broke up a big workers' demonstration in the northern Moroccan city of Al-Hoceima on July 20. The rally was called to protest corruption, underemployment and injustice. Previous smaller marches had been taking place in the city since October last year when a fishmonger was crushed to death trying to retrieve his fish that police had confiscated and thrown into a garbage truck.

Police ringed the city center and fired teargas to disperse the crowds. Internet access was also reportedly blocked. At least 83 were injured.

Protests are rare in Morocco. The most recent protest movement poses the biggest challenge to the monarchy, a key US ally, since the Arab Spring in 2011. A ban on protests decreed by the government failed to stop thousands from gathering in defiance.

## March by Algerian energy workers blocked

Energy workers rallying in the city of Bejaia on July 20 were met with a massive police presence that led to the arrest of around 600 union members and supporters.

The SNATEGS union had called the rally against the state energy company Sonelgaz. Faced with the massive police response the union abandoned the rally.

The rally had been called to protest the sacking of 92 SNATEGS members, criminal charges against 29 and civil charges against a further 900 who had taken part in widespread strikes against Sonelgaz for better wages and safer working conditions.

## Strike by Israeli pharmaceutical workers

Workers employed by Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. went out on strike on Monday against reorganization plans by the company, which would lead to around 350 job losses.

## Public sector strike in Italian cities of Rome and Naples

On July 20, public transport workers in the Italian cities of Rome and Naples held strikes to protest privatization measures.

Initially they were due to hold 24-hour strikes, but following the intervention of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation the strike duration was reduced. Bus, tram and underground train services were affected. Measures to limit the right of transport workers to strike are currently under discussion.

## Protest by Greek hotel staff

Greek hotel staff held a strike July 20 to protest labour reforms that will cut the minimum wage, weaken their employment rights, increase their

hours and lead to more "flexible" working conditions.

Some hotel staff are employed on a day-by-day contract offering no security of job tenure. Hundreds of them attended a rally in central Athens. Tourism is responsible for around 18 percent of the country's GDP.

## Walkout threat by Greek museum and archeological staff

Museum and archeological staff in the Attica peninsula, which includes Athens, are due to strike tomorrow and Sunday. The strike has been called by the Panhellenic Federation of Culture Ministry Employees.

Their demands include the hiring of additional administrative staff, archeologists and guards, and for overtime pay for guards. The strike call has been opposed by the Greek Tourism Confederation and the Federation of Tourism and Travel Agencies, because of the huge number of tourists attracted to historic sites. They have called on the government to intervene.

## Unofficial overtime ban by fire brigade staff in Irish capital

Firefighters and paramedics working for the Dublin Fire Brigade have been operating an unofficial overtime ban this week by not making themselves available for overtime during daytime shifts.

They are seeking an increase in the overtime rate from its current 1.25 times the basic hourly rate to 1.5 times the rate.

## UK rail staff in Liverpool area hold one-day strike

Rail staff working for Merseyrail, which covers the wider Liverpool area, held a well-supported 24-hour strike on July 23. They are opposing the expansion of the use of driver only operated (DOO) trains, which would eliminate the safety role of guards and would lead to job cuts.

The date coincided with the opening of the Open Golf tournament in Southport.

## Welsh housing association staff strike over pay cut

Support workers employed by the Bron Afon housing association in Cwmbran in South Wales began a three-day strike on July 21 against an imposed £3,000 pay cut. They are members of Unison. It was their second bout of such strike action, with a third one planned beginning August 3.

## Further action by housing maintenance staff in Manchester

Around 170 staff working for the property maintenance company Mears that operates in the Manchester area are continuing their all-out strike, which began on July 8 and is set to continue until August 7.

Members of the Unite union, they are taking action over pay differentials within the company that can mean workers performing the same tasks, but suffering a £3,500 pay difference. The long-running action has led to a huge backlog of maintenance work for the 12,000

tenants affected.

### **Strike threat by Lisbon metro staff**

Staff working for the Portuguese Lisbon capital Metro system are due to strike on August 1 and 3. They are represented by the Fectrans Transport and Communications union. They are calling for more staff to be employed to overcome the current staff shortage and for more money to be invested in the Metro infrastructure.

### **Portuguese refinery staff in dispute**

As of this writing, staff at the Galp Energia refinery in the Portuguese port of Sines were due to begin a six-day partial strike on Wednesday.

The union has limited the action, meaning production would not be seriously affected. The union is demanding the company return to negotiations on a collective bargaining agreement.

### **Cypriot bank staff suspend strike**

Etiky, the bank workers' union, called off a 48-hour strike in the APS Debt Servicing division at the Hellenic Bank on Tuesday. The strike had started the previous day.

The union called off the strike following an intervention by Labour Minister Zeta Emilianidou. The strike developed after the Hellenic Bank, which has a 49 percent stake in the APS Debt Servicing, changed workers' employment terms following the transfer of Hellenic staff to APS. The union said it would call a general assembly meeting to decide on how to proceed.

### **Kenyan nurses strike enters its eighth week**

Kenyan nurses are continuing their strike, now in its eighth week, under conditions of a rising cholera outbreak. The 25,000 nurses resumed their national strike at the beginning of June after the government reneged on the nurses' collective bargaining agreement signed in December.

The cholera outbreak was originally concentrated in and around Nairobi where hospitals are unable to cope. Further outbreaks, however, are arising in Kisumu County and an outbreak has been suspected at the Katsaka Kairu refugee camp in Witu, Lami County.

### **South African National Parks staff call national action**

South African SANParks workers have come out on a national strike demanding a nine percent wage increase. The strike had been taken up in the conciliation and mediation process, but broke down with the employer still offering an unacceptable six percent wage rise.

Police and South African Defence Force personnel have been stationed at the parks entrances, supported by volunteers from Working for Water.

### **Health authority emergency service workers strike in Eastern Cape, South Africa**

South African health authority emergency service workers have come out on strike. They are taking action to demand pay for overtime worked.

The health department asserts the strike is limited to just three areas, Butterworth, Alice and Keiskammahoeek in the Eastern Cape.

The emergency workers' employers are claiming that checking off the workers' overtime claims is taking some time but in the meantime are using private entities to carry out their jobs.

### **South African pathologist continue their strike**

South Africa's National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) pathologist strike began on Wednesday to demand allowances.

Although the public service pathologists, members of the National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) had agreed on a 7.3 percent pay offer, the NHLS would not agree to the workers' allowance claims.

The pathologists want improvements in housing benefits, medical aid and uniform allowances. NEHAWU had already reduced its pay claim from 13 percent and is still hoping the strike can be resolved by Friday.

The lab employers maintain that they cannot pay the allowances unless provinces with outstanding debt, such as Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal, pay what they owe. NLHS is responsible for all pathology work in the public sector, such as for cancer and HIV/AIDS.

### **Nigerian academics union proscribed in Kogi State**

The Nigerian academics' union in Kogi State has been proscribed by the state governor. The union, the Academic Staff Union of Universities, has been on strike for seven months and accused the state governor of being worse than the military.

The governor ordered the academics back to work and those who do not return should consider themselves out of work.

The proscription came after a meeting of the State Executive Council and shortly after a meeting of Council of Governors, and is being brought forward to enforce the state's dictats.

### **Medical workers in Kogi State threaten walkout**

The Medical Health Workers Union (MHWU) in Kogi State Nigeria is threatening to strike over the threat to outsource their jobs. The union claims the state administration has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to hand over the role of environmental health to a private company.

A spokesman for the MHWU says the private company does not have the trained people and they pose a security threat to the public, as they have to enter peoples' homes.

### **Nigerian Employment Minister instructs union leaders to get members back to work**

The Nigerian Minister of State and Employment in Abuja has appealed to striking workers at the Corporate Affairs Commission to return to work. He gave union leaders of the Nigerian Labour Congress until Wednesday for its members to return to their jobs.

Workers at the Commission have been on strike since July18, and last week padlocked the gates. They are striking over non-payment of allowances and poor working conditions.

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