

Threat of Ryanair strikes across Europe; Portuguese delivery drivers strike begins; Kenyan public workers in 15 counties are set to walk out

Workers Struggles: Europe, Middle East & Africa

16 August 2019

The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Ryanair strike votes across Europe

The Irish Airline Pilots' Association (Ialpa) members have voted by a 94 percent majority for a stoppage at Ryanair. Ialpa, part of the Forsa trade union, has not however, announced strike dates, writing to Ryanair management to reconsider their demands.

Forsa representatives met with Ryanair management on Wednesday for talks mediated by Kieran Mulvey, the retired former head of the Workplace Relations Commission. As of this writing, the outcome of the talks is not known.

Pilots at the Spanish arm of Ryanair voted to strike in September. The Spanish pilots are demanding a pay increase but are also opposing Ryanair's plans to close three Spanish bases—at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Tenerife Sur and Girona. Ryanair says the threatened closures are due to the delay in delivery of Boeing 737 Max planes after two crashed.

Portuguese cabin crew at Ryanair will strike between August 21 and 25. The SNVPAC union members are opposing the proposed closure of the Ryanair base at Faro airport with the loss of 120 jobs.

British-based Ryanair pilots previously voted to take strike action by an 80 percent majority on a 72 percent turnout. Dates announced for the strikes are August 22 and 23 and three days from September 2 to 4.

The British Airline Pilots' Association members are seeking higher pay and have grievances over license insurance, maternity benefits and allowances.

Ryanair staff face the threat of 900 redundancies (500 pilots, 400 cabin crew) as competition in the industry intensifies.

Airport staff in northwest England set to strike

Around 200 workers at baggage handling company Swissport at the John Lennon airport, Liverpool are to take 12 hours strike action on August 22, 24 and 29 as well as an overtime ban. The GMB members may hold further strikes in September.

The Swissport baggage handlers are contracted to EasyJet and Mainline to handle passenger luggage. They are demanding a pay rise and highlighting health and safety issues and work practices.

UK social security staff strike vote

Staff dealing with Universal Credit claims at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in Stockport in northwest England have voted to

strike. The Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members voted for action by an over 90 percent majority on a 71 percent turnout.

They are protesting the heavy workloads associated with processing Universal Credit applications. They are also demanding more staff to deal with the workload and high levels of absenteeism due to stress.

The PCS, however, has not called a strike but has written to the DWP requesting urgent talks to resolve the dispute.

Strikers at UK government offices hold joint march

Caterers and cleaners at contracting firms ISS and Aramark at the Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) office in London are in the fifth week of an indefinite strike. The PCS members are demanding the London living wage, set at £10.55.

Cleaning and catering staff working at the HMRC (tax) offices in Bootle and Liverpool also employed by ISS and Aramark walked out for three days this week. They are demanding £10 an hour.

On Tuesday, strikers from BEIS joined with the Liverpool strikers on a march.

Further strike at UK train company

Rail workers at East Midlands Trains are due to strike on Saturday, the fourth in the course of the dispute. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union members are opposing attacks on their pay and work conditions.

The franchise is run by Stagecoach but will be taken over by Abellio on Saturday and called East Midlands Railways.

TSSA, the union representing administration and office workers at East Midlands Trains, has called for the transfer to be postponed until a review into rail franchises due soon is completed.

Shipyards occupation in Northern Ireland continues

The occupation of the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast, Northern Ireland continues. The yard is in administration under the auspices of accounting firm BDO. The jobs of 130 workers are under threat.

Last week, the GMB and Unite unions reached an agreement with BDO for workers to be laid-off temporarily rather than declared redundant. The lay-off period was to be the end of this week, but GMB has now said that it has been extended beyond Friday. The workers are calling for the yard to be renationalised. It was nationalised in the 1980s and 1990s.

Harland and Wolff has been in operation since 1861 and built the famed Titanic between 1909 and 1911. In its heyday, the yard employed 30,000 workers.

Turkish glassworkers strike over union recognition

Glassworkers have been on strike at the Okan group's Düzce Cam factory in the town of Düzce, northwest Turkey since July 26. The workers have been involved in a four-year struggle for the Kristal-I? union to be recognised by the company.

The Ministry of Labour ruled that the union has the right to be the bargaining representative, but the company has ignored this, sacking around 80 workers over the course of the dispute because of their union membership.

Protest by dismissed Turkish municipal workers now in fourth month

Following the election of the Mayor of the municipality of Bolu, northwest Turkey, 97 municipal workers were dismissed. In response the Hizmet-I? trade union initiated a sit-in protest outside the municipality headquarters, which has now passed 100 days. During this period, 6,000 workers marched 200 kilometres from Bolu to Ankara in support of the dismissed workers.

Ukrainian miners protest wage arrears

Miners working for the state-owned Selidivvugillia at the Kurakhivska and Ukraine mines blocked the main road connecting Mariupol to the rest of the Donetsk region on Monday. They were protesting wage arrears, having only received 22 percent of their May wages and having not been paid for June or July.

Miners at the Kapitaina mine, part of the state-owned Myrnogradvugillia group, walked out over non-payment of wages. They vowed not to return until they had been paid.

Miners said they will protest near the presidential palace on August 25 (Miners' Day) if the arrears are not paid.

Strike by waste plant workers in Lebanese city of Sidon

The 450 workers at the solid waste plant at Nabatieh's Siniq in south Sidon, Lebanon, held a strike last week to protest wages not being paid for the last year. The strike led to rubbish piling up in the streets. Workers picketed the plant to prevent lorries taking in refuse.

Kenyan county workers to strike over unpaid wages

Public sector workers in around 15 out of Kenya's 47 counties are set to strike beginning Tuesday to demand their July wages.

A seven-day strike notice was issued last week by the Kenya County Government Workers Union, the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union and the Kenya National Union of Nurses, with other unions expected to follow. In Kisumu county alone, 7,000 workers will take action.

Four counties promised to pay the wages at the beginning of this week.

Others are using a delay in the Division of the Revenue Bill going through parliament to hold up payment. The bill is unlikely to be ratified before parliament returns from the summer recess, leaving at least 15 counties with an excuse not to pay up.

South African energy workers threaten pay strike as ANC government moves to ban strikes

South Africa's energy workers are threatening to strike for a 9.7 percent pay demand, as opposed to the industry's offers, ranging from six and half percent to nothing. The Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union members are also demanding improved work conditions.

South Africa's Essential Service Commission (ESC) is considering whether to categorise energy workers and teachers as part of essential services in order to ban industrial action.

Workers are planning to protest outside ESC hearings next month across the country.

South African university staff and students continue strike and lockout of management

A strike at South Africa's Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Pretoria, begun July 26 is continuing.

Staff and students walked out and locked the university to demand the removal of management and improved infrastructure and learning conditions.

The demands of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union members and student councils have been partially met with the suspension of the vice chancellor, who is under investigation. Staff and students are also demanding the removal of the rest of management on the grounds of corruption.

Union calls off South Africa hospital workers stoppage for protective clothing

The South African hospital workers strike at Rob Ferreira Hospital, Nelspruit, has been called off by the union.

The workers walked out to demand uniforms, boots and equipment. Management has fobbed them off with false promises since 2016.

On August 8, hospital workers occupied the hospital boardroom because management have ignored their demands. On Monday, workers blocked entry to the hospital.

On Monday and Tuesday, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union held talks with management, who said they are dealing with workers' concerns.

South Africa cheap labour scheme workers protest for pay increase at ANC headquarters

Employees of a South African cheap labour scheme demonstrated at the African National Congress headquarters in Johannesburg on Monday.

Around 100 workers employed on the Community Works Programme (CWP) are demanding a wage increase.

CWP workers say they have been sending letters to the Department of Corporate Governance for two years. The government initially promised to respond in two weeks.

Workers want a minimum payment of R1,000 as opposed to the R780 they receive presently for the 12 days they put in a month and more hours.

South African Amathole Municipal water workers strike continues

South African water workers in Amathole municipality have been on strike for over three weeks.

The action is part of the municipal workers' stoppage to demand a 6.5 percent wage increase, related to the district becoming a category 7 municipality up from 6. They also want the sacking of the municipal manager and the corporate service director who they accuse of corruption.

Municipal management has been granted a court order to secure its facilities and have brought in scabs to distribute water in security guarded tankers and provide security at treatment plants.

Botswana public sector unions threaten demonstrations to demand pay increase

Botswana public sector workers are demanding a pay rise equal to that the state forces received. The Botswana Sectors of Educators Trade Union, the Botswana Nurses Union, the Botswana Teachers Union, the Botswana Land boards, Local Authorities and Health Workers Union and the Botswana Public Employees Union members want a 10-15 percent rise. They are planning weekly demonstrations, which will affect the elections set for October 24.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>

