



# Socialist Bulletin



*A monthly publication from Socialist Labour*

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N100

## Solidarity Wins Strikes

The major challenge we face is inequality and the associated corruption. The price of oil is now back to pre-Covid-19 levels or 50% higher than the benchmark price in the 2021 Federal budget. So there is plenty of money, for example, to pay the 30,000 Naira minimum wage and provide a further large increase this year. The problem is how we can force governments and other employers to provide proper wages and conditions.

Negotiations or talking to the bosses only provides marginal gains. The NLC leadership spent years talking to the federal government and governors. Eventually, the 30,000 Naira minimum wage became law in 2019 – three years late. A further two years later half the states have yet to fully implement than this minimum wage.

In contrast, active strikes and solidarity are the way to win our demands.

The ASUU leadership called for weekly congresses and monthly town hall meetings in all universities. Unfortunately, this was not implemented and so their wonderful strike was not able to win their major demands.

ASUU members needed to reach out to students to explain their case and seek the support of their parents. Each branch of ASUU should have reached out to local trade union branches to offer speakers to explain the reasons of the strike to their members and to have called them to discuss the reasons for the strike. They needed to call for solidarity messages, support and action from local trade unionists. ASUU members needed to have organised activities at least weekly to gain support for their strike with fliers given out in markets and other popular areas.

Similarly in the health sector. There are a range of wonderful strikes by doctors, nurses and other health workers in various states. But these need to be brought together with a national strike by JOHESU and the doctors. JOHESU organised a 'warning strike' in September, but have yet to organise the necessary indefinite strike.

*Solidarity Wins Strikes* demands the following:

- Strikes rather than talks are the way to win
- Strikes need the active support of all workers
- Strikes need to involve all workers in a sector to win
- Strikes need active calls for solidarity from other workers to win
- Support for all strikes and organise solidarity
- NLC and TUC need to call a general strike to win a decent minimum wage and stop fuel or electricity price increases.

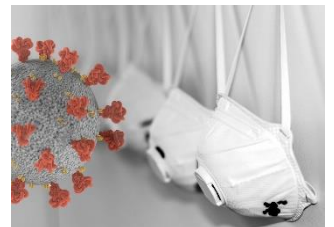
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# NLC/TUC Demonstrate They Can Still Organise Across the Country

Drew Povey

The NLC and TUC were able to organise protests at the Houses of Assembly in most states on 10<sup>th</sup> March over the minimum wage. The protests in Lagos and Abuja were widely reported and had thousands of trade unionists attending.



## Protestors in Ekiti State

In Ekiti, activities at the Ekiti State House of Assembly were shut down for over three hours as aggrieved workers stormed the assembly over the Minimum Wage Bill. This was despite the fact the NLC/TUC had only mobilised ten comrades from each union. As in most states, full mobilisation of trade unionists was not even attempted.

## Thousands protest in FCT



According to Punch "As early as 9am on Wednesday, about 2,000 protesters had besieged the main entrance of the National Assembly. Although security agents shut the gate and prevented them from entering, at 11am they overwhelmed the operatives and forced their way in."

Similarly, in Lagos, members of the NLC and the TUC protested at the Lagos State House of Assembly. "The unionists, who were stopped at the entrance to the House of Assembly by security men, later gained access to the premises." They also laid siege to the governor's office to prevent him from accessing it.

The trade unions were able to mobilise thousands of their members, so the police took a back seat. In Abuja a protestor said, "No intimidation, no police suppression. A police van tried to enter the Unity Fountain earlier [the start of the demonstration], they shouted on them and sent them packing." There was no mention of any arrests, tear gas or shootings in any on the states.

Back in FCT "After their members had entered through the main gate, the National President of the NLC, Ayuba Wabba, and his TUC counterpart, Quadri Olaleye, led other labour leaders to the National Assembly complex through the second gate. The labour leaders thereafter presented their petition to the House and the Senate." (Punch)

In Kogi State, besides protesting the bill, workers also demonstrated against non-implementation of the N30,000 minimum wage. The NLC and the TUC during a protest at the state House of Assembly gave the state government a March 22 deadline to fully implement the minimum wage.

Protests were also held in the following states: Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Bauchi, Calabar, Delta, Edo, Ekiti, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Nasarawa, Niger, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara. In total, protests took place in at least 25 state capitals.



## Protest in Niger State

We hope that these protests will kick start strikes in all states where the N30,000 minimum wage has not been fully implemented. We also need another large increase this year and indexation of the minimum wage in future so that its buying power is retained. However, if we are to achieve a minimum wage that we can live on then we need full mobilisation by the trade unions of all their members. We need to frighten the bosses not just sit down and have comfortable chats with them.

# Violence Against Women under Capitalism

- Biodun Olamosu



Capitalism is a system that has completely changed all areas of human endeavour, especially through the development of science and technology. It is a system of appropriation of resources by a minority class, but one with enormous power at its disposal. The family inherited from pre-capitalist modes of production was nearly destroyed with the advent of the industrial revolution that engaged both men and women in work for long hours.

The conditions of workers was well depicted in [Engels' classic work: "The Condition of the Working Class in England"](#) (1845). This book painted a terrible, appalling and inhuman picture – one that is

maintained in the cities across the Global South and in pockets elsewhere. There was/is serious abuse of both children and women. For instance, there was nothing like maternity leave.

Some working class women actually delivered their babies on the factory floor. While others had to abandon their work just a day before delivery. After women did give birth they were often fired. Whereas work was very dear to working class women, as for men, some would have preferred to retain their jobs and loose the baby, if abortion had been available at the time – and many did use medically unsafe methods to achieve this – as illegality still does in Nigeria today.

This is why the [Communist Manifesto](#) (written by Marx and Engels for the Communist League in 1848) demanded free education for workers' children to put an end to child labour.

When it suits the position and discard ideological positions home to take care the 'bread winner'. their situation when when they were

The generations of were all the worse for blanket when they knew full an exploited class.

get something however small, rather than not getting anything at all. That is to say, "half a bread is better than none". For this reason, working class men were regarded by some as part of the privileged people in society.

*Men should not be defensive nor assume that women are bashing them or that they're "anti-men" when women are speaking up for their own dignity and the basic right to walk free from the fear of sexual violence. Male silence on this issue is violence. Men need to support protests against violence against women.*

capitalists they change their employing women. They use false to justify keeping women in the of their family - the children and Women were able to compare they worked in the factories to kept at home.

women marooned in their homes it. And this possibly informed their condemnation of men folk, even well that working men were also They believed that it was better to

From the workers' perspective, keeping women at home is a set back to the movement and the struggle against capitalism. Apart from the pecuniary interest (families clearly have more money if women go out to work), the participation of working class women would have been an added advantage to the struggle. This is of vital importance for the future agenda of transforming society by the all the labouring classes.

It is very clear, both in theory and practice, that the institution of the family has been structured for the purpose of reproducing future generations of workers. These are needed to replace the old working class men and women at their places of work. So capitalism is successively serviced and reproduced by the working class family.

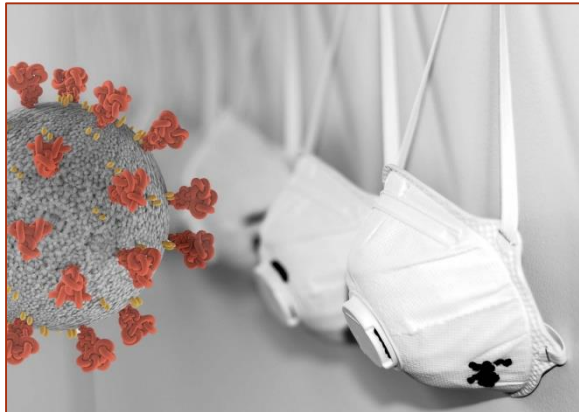
Further evidence of this is the fact that during the First and Second World Wars, women held the fort in the factories. While their men were fighting on the war fronts. When the war ended, such women were forced to abandon such positions.

From this analysis, the structure of the working class family has continually changed over time. Whilst continuing to play the vital role of replacing new generations of workers. In turn, trade unions have to adapt in defending the best interest of their members in alliance with other democratic forces to pursue the broader interest for the working women and men and other poor strata of society. This increasingly includes fighting to protect women, and men, from the violence of capitalism.

**This is an extract from a paper written by Biodun Olamosu. The full paper is available from the Socialist Labour website: <https://socialistlabour.com.ng/2021/03/17/oppression-of-women-and-fight-back-against-capitalism/>**

# Covid-19 Pandemic: The World of Work and the Politics of Curtailment

by Jaye Gaskia



The COVID-19 pandemic was formally declared by the World Health Organisation in January 2020. It has had and continues to have a devastating impact on the world. As of 6th March 2021, more than 116 million cases have been reported globally, with 66 million total recoveries and 2.6 million fatalities as a result of the pandemic.

In Nigeria, since the first case was reported in February 2020, there have been nearly 160,000 confirmed cases, with nearly 14,000 persons recovering from the disease and over 2,000 fatalities. Although a study in Lagos and Enugu in October/November 2020 suggested that one in five people may have had the virus.

What the crisis has shown is just how much economies and labour markets depend on each other. This interdependence should

provide the opportunity going forward for building a more inclusive and sustainable world order.

For instance, as of the end of May 2020 "Over 170 countries... have allocated a total of \$9 trillion to fiscal stimulus plans. Building on these steps and in order to accelerate the transition to a more inclusive, and sustainable and resilient world, large-scale and proactive policy actions should be pursued in the following three areas":

## 1. Provide Immediate Support for At-Risk Workers, Enterprises, Jobs and Incomes:

Urgent steps are required in the short-term to avoid job losses and income decline and mitigate the shift in work and labour into the domestic sphere. Interventions should build on existing institutions, while steering workers and enterprises towards sustainable development for a better and stronger recovery.

## 2. Ensure a Comprehensive Approach to Returning to Work:

Combatting the pandemic and restarting the economy are not competing priorities. On the contrary, they must go together. Returning to work does not mean giving up on protecting the health of workers or forgoing hard-won gains to suppress the spread of the virus. Protecting health does not mean keeping enterprises and economic activity locked down. Policies should ensure that both happen at the same time.

## 3. Creating Decent and Productive Jobs for a Green, Inclusive, and Resilient Recovery:

The world of work will not and should not look the same after this crisis. What is needed is a coordinated global, regional and national effort to create decent and productive jobs for all as the foundation of a green, inclusive and resilient recovery. In doing so, demographic shifts in ageing societies as well as the transition towards climate neutral economies need to be considered.

Over all, it is important that steps are taken and measures designed and implemented in consultation with workers towards ensuring, enabling and protecting the right to work, the right to a decent job, the right to accessible and affordable basic social services in health, education, housing, transportation, among others, as well as the right to social protection.

As workers and trade unionists who are some of the most affected by the pandemic; we have a duty to ensure that we are actively engaged in the processes, and significantly influencing the changes and transformations in the world of work towards ensuring a more equitable, inclusive, socially just, and more rewarding world.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was originated by a Turkish couple living in Germany by a company quoted on a US stock exchange. It was developed in conjunction with Pfizer, a US company with a Greek CEO. One of the main production plants is in Belgium. The vaccine was tested at 120 sites globally. Ryan Richardson the Chief Strategy Officer at BioNTech is English. Mikael Dolsten the Chief Scientific Officer of Pfizer is Swedish-American.

We live in a global village and should share human achievements equally.

This is an extract from NOTES FOR A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE 24TH PLENARY SESSION OF THE NGC OF AUPCTRE IN ENUGU: 10TH MARCH 2021, the full notes are available from the Socialist Labour website:

<https://socialistlabour.com.ng/2021/03/17/covid-19-pandemic-the-world-of-work-and-the-politics-of-curtailment/>

# Heineken in Africa: A Multinational Unleashed

By Olivier Van Beemen

A book review by Tokunbo Oke



Occasionally, a book is published that adds flesh to theory. This book, an investigation into the activities in Africa of the Dutch brewing multinational, Heineken, adds credence to the Cuban revolutionary, Ernesto Che Guevara's famous maxim that "it is not my fault that reality is Marxist".

The book is also a neat corrective to the current dominant narrative that direct colonialism ended on the African continent about 60 years ago, Africans have been in control since then. Therefore, the argument goes, if Africa is still backward and underdeveloped, it is the fault of Africans and Africans alone. Van Beeman demonstrates that it is the relationship of multinationals like Heineken with members of the African ruling class that upholds the dystopia of African underdevelopment.

Heineken, according to Van Beeman likes to present itself as an upstanding, ethical company

contributing to the positive development of Africa. The reverse is the truth: Heineken is involved in tax avoidance, sexual abuse, has links to genocide, aids and abets high level governmental corruption, amongst other things.

Furthermore, in Africa, the profits that Heineken squeezes out of Africa are almost 50% above the global average. Beer costs more on the African continent in real terms than it does in Europe. The impression is given in the book that Africa is Heineken's most profitable market. The profits from Africa sustain the company.

The book is mainly a history of the company, interspersed with case studies of its activities in various African countries. "Africans like their beer", it is said and Heineken views itself as fulfilling a social need, making a profit and bringing much needed jobs to the continent. The book explodes several myths. Heineken hardly makes a dent in the high

levels of unemployment in African countries. All its brewing factories are automated, equipped with capital intensive technology requiring very few workers.

The other myth that the book explodes is Heineken's much vaunted Corporate Social Responsibility programme. Heineken builds and donates schools to communities, but the schools are painted with the company's corporate logo and colours, a situation, many have pointed out leads to underage drinking, since alcohol consumption is painted in such a positive light.

In Nigeria, the local representative of Heineken had a very cosy relationship with the then President of the country, General Olusegun Obasanjo. The relationship was so cosy that when the South African brewing giant SAB Miller wished to penetrate the Nigerian market, the local representative was able to talk the government into placing all sorts of administrative difficulties in SAB Millers path thus thwarting their attempt.

Another achievement of Heineken's local representative in Nigeria was to reverse the government's plans to increase excise duty, which would have hit Heineken hard. The local representative simply told the Minister of Finance not to do it and it was not done. "It was as simple as that" he is reported as saying. More chilling is, during a year of record beer sales, Heineken was given permission to use the strategic grain reserves that the country puts aside to be used in the event of famine.

There are many other case studies, equally as chilling. It encourages alcoholism in South Africa by promoting its brands in illegal bars in the townships, sales of beer and profits facilitate genocide in Rwanda, an attempt to source raw materials locally in Sierra Leone skews agricultural production and intensifies child labour. There are testimonies of how sex and prostitution are used to enhance beer sales.

Despite the light that Van Beemen shines on the nefarious activities of Heineken in Africa, the book does have some draw backs. I wish Van Beemen would have dwelt more on the negative aspects of beer consumption in Africa, especially since he admits that the native brew contains more vitamin B, C and potassium than the clear lager beer marketed by Heineken and fewer calories, alcohol, salt and sugar.

Overall, this is a very valuable book that demonstrates the contributions that multinationals make to Africa's continuing underdevelopment.

**More details of this book are available from:**  
<https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/heineken-in-africa/>

# Senegal: mass protests include Anti-French sentiments -

Amandla Thomas-Johnson



**Opposition supporters of leader Ousmane Sonko protest for his release outside the Justice Palace in Dakar [Aliou Mbaye/EPA]**

Mass protests have recently affected the French speaking West African country of Senegal. Like Nigeria, most people suffer poverty, inequality and the effects of corruption. As in Nigeria, people have also lost faith in the president Macky Sall, first elected three years before Buhari and, like him, marking a break with previous governments.

French supermarkets, petrol stations and mobile phone booths were burnt and looted as largely peaceful protests against rampant inequality, government corruption and stringent coronavirus restrictions added anger against the former colonial power.

The latest protests were sparked by the arrest of an outspoken opposition leader who had been accused of rape. Ousmane Sonko, who is popular with the country's youth, has since been released on bail but the rape charges remain.

The French presence is an everyday reality for the Senegalese people, with French troops visibly garrisoned in the capital, which is also home to France's largest embassy in sub-Saharan Africa. The country still uses the colonial-era CFA franc currency and retains French as an official language. French firms are the leading investor in Senegal accounting for 25 percent of Senegalese gross domestic product (GDP) much larger than the foreign sector in Nigeria.

Some critics say this arrangement, known as "Franceafrique", is at the root of anti-French discontent because it benefits France at the expense of Senegal, where nearly 40 per cent of the population lives in poverty.

Other observers point instead to the political rise of the opposition figure Sonko, whose arrest on March 3 triggered the protests. Critics allege that his fiery rhetoric may have whipped up his young supporters.

'We are a Franco-African country'

Ndongo Sylla, an economist, explained that the sheer number of key French businesses across the capital made

them an easy target for looters. "If you sabotage things in Senegal you have a high probability of sabotaging French property and business," he said. "We are a Franco-African country."

Sylla said that French businesses were perceived as much as virtual monopolies edging out the local competition as powerful symbols of the country's stark inequalities.

Toll roads, managed by the French engineering firm Eiffage, he said, have "created an economic divide between those who could afford them and others who have to endure long hours in traffic jams".

Senegal's uneasy relationship with France stretches back into the colonial era, a major flashpoint being the massacre in the Dakar suburb of Thiaroye in 1944 of hundreds of West African soldiers who fought to liberate France in World War II.

Meanwhile, successive Senegalese presidents have enjoyed close ties with Paris, most notably the poet-president, Leopold Senghor, who lived for the last decades of his life in the northern French region of Normandy.

## Colonial resentments

Colonial resentments and suspicion of elite collusion with France have become heightened in recent years, as a younger generation faces the stark inequality in the country.

Maramé Gueye, Associate Professor of African and African Diaspora Literatures at East Carolina University, said an incendiary 2007 speech given by French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar marked a turning point.

"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history," Sarkozy said. The speech caused an outrage in Senegal, with a leading newspaper *Sud Quotidien* calling it "an insult". Writers, intellectuals and politicians from across Africa joined in the condemnation of Sarkozy's talk.

Meanwhile, the faith Senegalese youth had placed in Macky Sall, the current president, in the 2012 election that brought him to power, faded fast, Gueye said, as he failed to stem rocketing youth unemployment and a crumbling education system.

2018 saw the emergence of "France Degage" (France Go), a major grassroots movement focused on

**#jointheresistance**

disengaging from the CFA franc, the currency used by 14 mainly former French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and regarded as the most poignant symbol of French economic neo-colonialism.

### Rise of Sonko

The following year, the CFA franc debate entered the mainstream, as Sonko, a tax inspector-turned whistleblower ran for president in 2019.

Sonko took 15 percent of the vote, electrifying young voters with a slick social media campaign as well as fiery speeches denouncing the CFA and Senegal elites' cosy relationship with France. "Our politicians are criminals,"

Sonko said in a video in 2018. "Those who have ruled Senegal from the start deserve to be shot!"

Sonko struck a more conciliatory tone when he spoke to Al Jazeera, denying he had incited supporters. "People are looting not because they support me but because they need provisions... The looting shows the failure of the state."

This is an edited version of an article by Amandla Thomas-Johnson. The original version is at:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/12/senegal-anti-french-sentiments-on-the-rise-amid-ongoing-protests>

## Strikes in February and March 2021

The National Executive Council (NEC) of the **Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)** in mid- February, "directed all states where the **national minimum wage of N30,000** is yet to be paid to immediately proceed on industrial action." The NEC viewed "the refusal to pay the new national minimum wage by state governments... as an act of criminality, betrayal of the oath of office sworn by state chief executives and a dangerous adventure in anarchy." The states involved include Ebonyi, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Kogi, Kwara, Ogun, Osun, Rivers, Zamfara and eight others. Unfortunately, this action has yet to materialise.

**Joint Action Committee of the Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Universities (SSANU) and the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) strike from Friday 5th February to Friday 26th February.** Demands included N20bn of earned allowances compared to a total of N40bn for the sector. The strike is also over the inconsistencies in the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS), non-payment of benefits of retired members, usurpation of some of their roles by academic staff among others. Congresses were held across the branches and resolutions collated. After a Memorandum of Action was signed with the Government, the strike was called off by the JAC from Friday 26th February despite the demands not being implemented.

**ASUU now threatens to return to strike** as the Federal Government fails on its promises to pay lecturers. Many were still owed salaries in mid-March of between two and ten months, especially those that refused to sign up to IPPIS.

**Taraba State University chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)** started an indefinite strike action on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March. The union's demands include the non-availability of the pension scheme, earned academic allowances and perimeter fencing. The strike started a few days after the state government paid off the four months' salary arrears owed academic staff of the institution.

**Plateau State University ASUU on strike from Friday 15th January to 3rd March.** Signed a Memorandum of Agreement to suspend the strike over insecurity, poor infrastructural development and arrears of earned allowances for its members going back at least three years. The University was expected to open from 8<sup>th</sup> March.

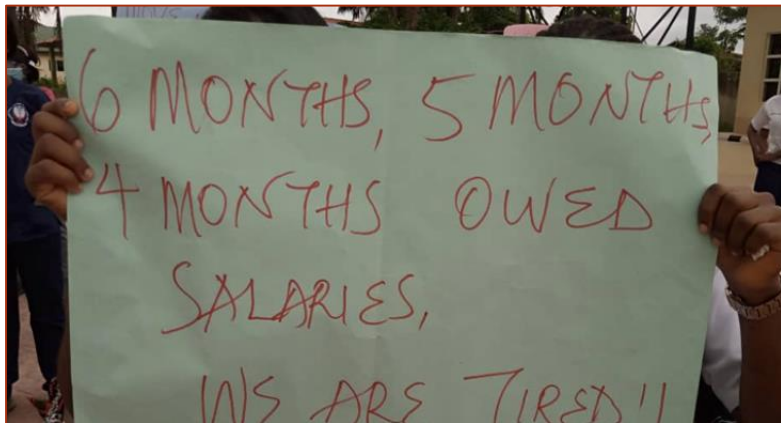
**Abia State NUT** primary and secondary teachers were on strike from 11th January 2021 over salary arrears of 12 to 15 months. The national NUT said action was being taken against states that had refused to implement the new minimum wage and owing teachers, starting with Abia State. The state government agreed to make teachers' salaries top priority and to pay outstanding arrears of salaries before the end of 2021. The teachers returned to work on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

The **Taraba State Chapter of the Association of Resident Doctors** on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February suspended its two-month-old strike. The strike action was over the government's inability to implement the Memorandum of Understanding signed in September 2020. The strike was also over the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hazard allowances for doctors, lack of running cost to the secondary healthcare facilities, non-implementation of 100% adjusted CONMESS, skipping, and new minimum wage. The Governor had met some of the demands made by the association, while other demands are receiving attention.

**Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), Nasarawa State** branch Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, commenced a three day warning strike to press home their demands despite government plea. The association said its members at Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital (DASH) Lafia proceeded on a warning strike because the Hospital management unilaterally suspended the residency training programme and there was victimization of its members for trying to protect themselves and the general public from Covid-19.

**Ondo State doctors** started an indefinite strike on 1st February over half salary regime since November 2020, unpaid 3 months' salary and poor working conditions. The doctors are also demanding the appointment of more doctors to replace those that left, implementation of Group Life Insurance, an end to half salary regime and improvement in the working conditions. This is under the auspices of Ondo Government Doctors Forum (OGDF). Members of the Nigerian Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAHP) joined the strike on 10<sup>th</sup> March.

The **nurses in Ondo State** under the auspices of the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives began a three-day warning strike over the payment of 50 percent salaries by the state government from Monday, March 1, 2021. They are considering joining their colleagues on indefinite strike.



**Health workers in Bayelsa State** members of Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria (MHUN) started an indefinite strike from Friday (12<sup>th</sup> February) over non-implementation of the minimum wage and up to 15 months arrears of salary and promotions. Primary health centres closed. The strike ended two weeks later with a promise from the State Government to implement promotion arrears with effect from the March salary. The Chair said that the union would give the Government the benefit of the doubt.

**Junior members of staff of Shoprite** Nigeria Limited, members of National Union of Shop and Distributive Employees (NUSDE) on Tuesday 2nd March, grounded operations in its stores in protest over uncertainties surrounding their employment status following the sale of the business to Nigerian investors by the South African owners. A meeting was agreed for Thursday.

Over 1,650 workers of the **National Engineering and Technical Company**, a major contractor to ExxonMobil, on Sunday (21<sup>st</sup> February) besieged the oil company's premises in Uyo, Akwa Ibom, over alleged non-payment of their entitlements. "We will stay here as long as they delayed to pay us our entitlements. It is ExxonMobil that permits people to come inside its facility and the company supervises the work but when it comes to payments of our entitlements, the company will pay deaf hears," Bassey their spokesperson said.

**Drivers of keke launched a strike in Kano**, towards the end of February. The action was to protest a new transportation tax of N100 a day imposed by the Kano State Roads and Traffic Agency (KAROTA). The strike was settled the next day with assistance from NLC, TUC, JNC and Kano Civil Society Forum (KCSF) who facilitated two hours of negotiations chaired by NLC State Chair.

Members of the **Amalgamated Union of Foodstuff and Cattle Dealers of Nigeria** (AUFCDN), on Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> February commenced a nationwide strike following the expiration of a seven-day ultimatum. AUFCDN was demanding protection of its members, payment of N4.75 billion compensation for lives of members and properties lost during the #EndSARS protest and Shasa market chaos. The union also demanded that the government should dismantle all road blocks on federal highways due to problems its members have. The strike was suspended on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The government promised to pay the N4.75 billion, ensure protection of their members and stop all forms of multiple taxation on the highways.

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