



How Can the FCT Area Council Workers Strike Win?

Workers of Abuja area councils have been on an indefinite strike since late March over implementation of the minimum wage. This strike is an important test case. Around 20 states have also yet to implement the minimum wage. If the trade unions cannot win in Abuja, then it will be more difficult in many states. Complete victory is not likely unless other trade unions provide immediate and sustained solidarity actions.

Members of NUT, NULGE, NANNM, and MHWUN in the area councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have been on strike for over one and a half months, since 24th March. The strike is not just over the implementation of the Minimum Wage Act, but has far wider implications and requires robust solidarity for victory to be won. NULGE estimates that 20 states have also failed to implement the law and all governments regularly fail to implement formal agreements with trade unions.

The strike had previously been suspended in October after a 20 day strike, in December after 12 days and on Friday, 21st February after promises from the FCT Minister to pay the minimum wage in February. The secondary school teachers were excluded from the December strike as they were paid the N70,000 from 9th December. This was also paid to the workers in three area councils in early May. A Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with council chairs to pay minimum wage in January and five months arrears (August – December) in February. This was not implemented.

The strike currently continues. The NULGE strike leader said, “the payment of the new wage doesn’t mean that the union will call off or suspend its strike because there are other entitlements which are still pending.” These include eight months arrears of the minimum wage and arrears from other wage awards.

Protests were held on 24th April outside Wike’s office. Wike, the FCT Minister, appears to be insensitive to appeals to his conscience. It is only robust action by the wider trade union movement that will make him ensure that the Area Council Chairs use the money they have been given to pay the minimum wage.

Socialist Labour is committed to the effective trade union action that is necessary to ensure that all trade union members share the wealth that we create. After the primary schools and primary health care centres have been closed for approaching two months, this strike can still be completely victorious with solidarity actions from other trade unionists. We appeal to all trade union branches in Abuja to discuss this issue, to send messages of support and to consider how they can deliver the essential solidarity action for this strike to win.

In solidarity!

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