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# Socialist Bulletin

A Monthly Publication from Socialist Labour

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## WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF WE MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD

**We** live in frightening times. Inflation is now well over 30%. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the cost of a healthy diet is now almost N30,000 a month for a single person, just for food (without preparation or transport to market costs). The government is tripling the price of electricity and threatening to unilaterally impose an inadequate minimum wage on May Day. This is linked with a rise in mass kidnapping, as the hope for mass collective action to improve our lives appears to fade.

Despite this, there is hope. The people of Senegal have voted for a radical alternative as their president. Only 10 days before the election he was in prison. We do not have to put up with leaders who are hell bent on imposing Neoliberal solutions to further enrich themselves and their friends and families.

We are entitled to a decent increase in the minimum wage. This would immediately take millions of workers and their families out of poverty. With their extra money they would have more to spend in the market and on transport. As a result, millions of market women and okada drivers could afford to eat each day. The pressure to hustle or turn to crime would reduce and we would all be safer.

We need a large increase in the minimum wage this year and a move towards annual increases, at least as high as inflation. A detailed briefing is available for free download from: <https://ivavalleybooks.com/2024/01/02/briefing-on-the-minimum-wage/>

But we will not achieve the much needed increase in the minimum wage without a struggle. As things stand, it is either now or we have to wait another five years. The Federal and state governments have plenty of money as the price of crude oil is again approaching \$90 a barrel and we demonstrate in more detail in the following article:

<https://socialistlabour.com.ng/2024/02/28/governments-have-plenty-of-money-to-pay-for-a-decent-minimum-wage-and-our-other-demands/>

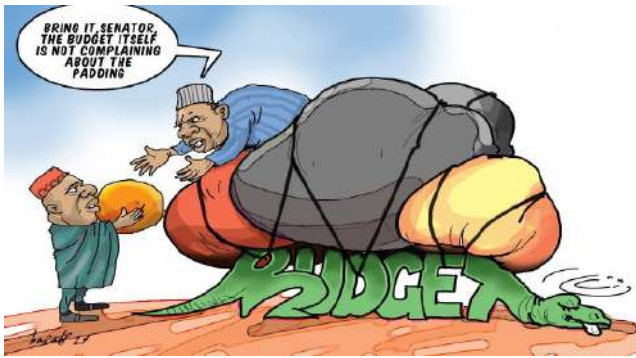
We cannot afford to wait and see. We need all members of trade unions to step up their agitation for action. We need comrades to talk to their trade union branch officers and encourage motions to be sent to their state and national offices. More details are provided later in this Socialist Bulletin.

By promising to implement the Oronsaye Report, Tinubu is threatening to launch another attack on public sector workers. Again we need an effective response from our trade union leaders and pressure from the relevant trade union members to stop any job losses. Trade unions can plan their action, as necessary, in each ministry, department and agency by using the following tool: <https://socialist-labour-ng.shinyapps.io/oronsaye-report/>

Now is the time to demand action from the trade unions and to try and ignite the protest movement. We can make a difference to the lives of ourselves and our families. We do not have to be hungry. We need to talk to each other in every workplace and demand accountability from our leaders. Together we can make a difference. If we can reverse the tide of poverty, we can also introduce the most effective way of reducing insecurity.

Visit: [socialistlabour.com.ng](https://socialistlabour.com.ng)

## Deep Corruption in the National Assembly



The civil society organisation, BudgIT, supports Senator Ningi's allegations. The National Assembly inserted nearly 7,500 constituency like projects worth approximately N2,280 billion into the 2024 budget.

See the report on this issue from BudgIT:

[https://budgit.org/post\\_publications/senator-ningis-allegations-and-indiscriminate-insertions-in-the-2024-budget/](https://budgit.org/post_publications/senator-ningis-allegations-and-indiscriminate-insertions-in-the-2024-budget/)

Corruption is mainly around capital spending. Contractors have to pay those controlling the projects a percentage of the value of the contract to win the contract. This may be as much as 60% of the value of the contract.

On average pay and allowances for each member of the National Assembly is nearly N6 million a month - <https://punchng.com/federal-state-lawmakers-to-get-n49bn/>

In addition, they are able to claim a duty tour allowance (N50,000 per night) for official trips within Nigeria and an Estacode (\$1,300 per night) for official foreign trips.

Members of the National Assembly are also given funding for constituency projects with a total capital budget of N100 billion. This money can be allocated as they choose. The fact that the members of the National Assembly essentially increased the value of these projects by a massive N2,280 billion is the core of Senator Ningi's allegations. Members of the National Assembly were planning to steal an additional 10% of the total Federal budget for 2024.

## Student Loans

The Student Loans Act marks yet another embarrassing policy reversal by the Tinubu Government. The revised act, currently in National Assembly, removes some of the glaring faults of the original Act. However, the fundamental problems of student loans remain. They discriminate against poorer students, require huge bureaucratic costs and encourage corruption.

The students loan policy is based on a lie. This is that Nigeria is too poor to fund public education. The government has enough resources to fund public education if these resources were democratically-planned and managed instead of being stolen by the corrupt capitalist elite.

We need a united campaign against student loans, the petrol price hike and other anti-people policies. We need students and the organised working class to work together to overturn these attacks.

The existing poverty amongst students was clearly demonstrated by the deaths of two students of Nasarawa State University following a stampede that occurred during a palliative sharing programme. In February, seven persons lost their lives in a stampede at the Nigeria Customs Service office in Yaba, Lagos, during the sale of 25kg bags of rice to Lagos residents.

More details of the arguments against student loans can be found in the following free pamphlet. This was written in response to the original Students Loan Act, but still remains largely valid:

<https://ivavalleybooks.com/2024/01/03/10-reasons-why-student-loans-are-a-scam/>



## Getting More Active in Your Trade Union



We need all supporters of Socialist Labour to be more active in their trade union branches. That way we can all help to win a decent minimum wage in the coming months.

Below we provide some practical advice. **We need to improve this with your ideas, suggestions and experience.**

Talk to your work colleagues about the key demands that the trade unions should be making locally and nationally.

Find out who your local trade union branch officials are (chair, secretary, treasurer etc). Talk to them about calling a full general branch meeting to discuss, for example, the NLC/TUC campaign for a decent minimum wage, the implementation of the Oronsaye Report and preparations that can be made for action.

Develop a motion to be discussed and agreed by your trade union branch. You could perhaps use and adopt the following, for example:

This trade union branch (insert name) congratulates the NLC/TUC for its commitment to demanding a decent minimum wage and against job losses from the implementation of the Oronsaye Report .

We call on the NLC/TUC to widen its demands to include the following. Any strike action should be continued until each of these demands has actually been fully implemented:

- payments of an award of N35k a month to all federal workers
- payment of all salary and pension areas in states and payment of proper palliatives
- reversal of tuition fee hikes and the introduction of a maximum affordable fee level
- payment of all with-held salaries to ASUU and other education unions for 2022 strike
- reversal of the hikes in petrol prices
- removal of the collection of levies, fees, dues and tolls from petty traders.

We call on our trade union branch officers to call for support any local community protests over the cost of living. We need an alliance between the trades unions, the market women and other informal workers.

We call on our state trade union officers organise town hall meetings to popularise our demands.

This motion should be submitted to the state and national levels of the union for support and ratification.

If your trade union branch officers do not call a general meeting for your trade union branch in the next few days, then develop a petition for your colleagues to sign to demand such a general meeting.

Find out when the next elections are to be held for your branch executive and consider standing for one of the positions or proposing another comrade who may be a good trade union leader. This may enable you to become more active in your trade union at the state level.

If these basic steps are taken then the vitality of the whole trade union movement will be improved and we will all benefit. More details are available from the following pamphlet:

<https://ivavalleybooks.com/2024/01/03/unity-and-solidarity-how-we-can-win-strikes-2/>

## Oronsaye Report – we need to save jobs



The Socialist Labour public meeting in March was on “How trade unions can stop implementation of Oronsaye’s Report and save jobs?”. The meeting discussed the various ways that the cost of governance could be reduced without the loss of workers’ jobs. It called on the trade unions to undertake appropriate research.

The recording of the public meeting is available to watch from:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-y0cVUjPLjuBEqRj11ZiHPKJs8fB9UGa0iyhOsKaSGC6JNqydZm-KoZJmgCYAWAnL.lkVuy6nsRUY-QTqf>

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#jointheresistance



## Socialism and Nationalism - MOHAMED TAHRIR

There are many ways of looking at the world. We can look at the world from a class perspective or we can broadly look at the world from the perspective of nationalism.

Nationalists see the world from the point of view of competing nations or ethnic groups. For them, we have to work together to build our nation or in Donald Trump's words, we have to "make America great again". As socialists, we need to consistently argue from a class perspective.

As Karl Marx said, "the ruling ideas of any era are those of the ruling class". So the dominant ideas now are those of nationalism. It appears to be common sense that we need to develop the Nigerian economy so that we can all become more affluent like the economically developed countries of the world.

The problem is that at least over the period from 2000 to 2015 the Nigerian economy did grow at a rapid rate. At the end of the period, the GDP in real terms was at least three times higher than it had been 15 years earlier. However, all of this additional wealth and more was taken by the ruling class.

The vast majority of Nigerians were poorer in 2015 and they had been in 2000. This is still true, the mass of the people are poorer now than they were 5, 10 or 20 years ago. Growth of the economy the Nigerian economy has not benefited most people.

As a result, any demand by the trade union leaders to sit down with the government and to discuss the best way forward to develop the country is grossly misguided. We need the trade unions of the NLC and the TUC



to organise a vigorous campaign of industrial action to force the government and the bosses to increase our wages and so begin to reduce the disgusting level of inequality within Nigeria.

Similarly, a nationalist interpretation of events in Niger is inadequate. It is not simply the case that France has been exploiting Niger for its raw materials, primarily uranium. The French control over the national currency of Niger does not necessarily have an adverse effect for all Nigeriens. The over valuation of the CFA has some benefits for the rich because it makes the importation of their luxury items cheaper. This helps to explain why the ruling classes of West African nations have broadly accepted the CFA and not adopted their own currencies.

For these reasons, we have to consistently argue against all nationalist interpretations. Of course imperialism and the acts of the French government impact on the lives of ordinary people in Niger. But Niger has its own ruling class who are extremely wealthy. There are areas of Niamey that are similar to Asokoro or Maitama.

We have to go beyond merely repeating the dominant arguments on the left that it is imperialism that is to blame. We have to consistently argue that inequality arises automatically from the effects of capitalism in Nigeria and across the world.

It is not that the people living in Asokoro conspire to exploit and oppress the people of Nyanya for example. The fantastic wealth of the people of Asokoro and the poverty of those living in Nyanya are the results of the operation of the capitalist economy. The impact is the same internationally, between countries.

We need to consistently argue from the class struggle perspective. We need the trade unions to make maximum use of unity and solidarity to win their strikes. We cannot work together with the bosses to develop our country, this only ever result in them developing their wealth at the cost of our poverty.

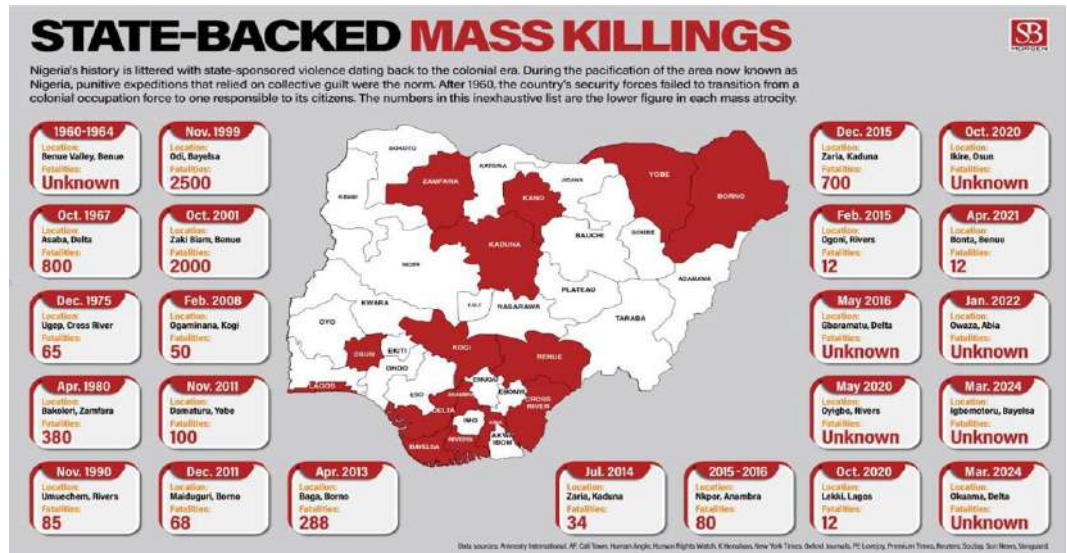
The struggle for socialism, against our own ruling classes, commences at the national level but it cannot remain there. International forces will then be arrayed against us. This is why we must argue against all forms of national solutions (national development, socialism in one country etc) to our problems. We need to struggle for the class unity of working people globally. Our enemies are not British workers, French workers, the Chadian, Togolese or Ghanaian working classes but the ruling classes of all nations, including our own.

## The Security Forces are Continuing to Kill the Common People

This list does not claim to be complete, for example, the bombings by the Air Force in Nasarawa and Niger States in January 2023 are not included. It does show that the security forces are not there to protect the common people. Their role is to protect the rich and the powerful.

Also read the following article:

<https://socialistlabour.com.ng/2022/12/08/does-asking-the-government-to-do-more-on-security-save-lives-al-ex-batubo/>



## Abia Governor is Still Borrowing from Staff and Pensioners to Fund Capital Spending- ALEX BATUBO



In the fourth quarter of last year, Abia State spent less than N6bn on personnel costs (not much more than 50% of the relevant budget for the quarter). In contrast, it spent 110% or well over the budget for the quarter on capital expenditure. Money that should have been spent on salary and pension arrears was 'borrowed' by the Labour Party Governor to spend on capital projects.

In June 2023, the new Governor, Alex Otti, promised to start paying salary arrears by the end of the month. He claimed that "The immediate past government was owing civil servants in the state for upwards of 30 months salary arrears." He estimated that the total indebtedness of the previous administration to be over N200 billion.

The judiciary workers of Abia State went on strike in June last year over salary arrears owed from their strike in January 2015. Alex Otti, the Labour Party Governor of the state, promised to pay the arrears as part of the deal to end the strike, but only made a first part-payment in November, nearly six months later.

In August 2023, the Commissioner of Finance of Abia State promised to pay all arrears of salary and pensions by the end of the year. At the time a verification exercise was being undertaken of all civil servants. He estimated salary arrears to be over N50bn.

By the end of last year, the Government had only spent 1% of the budget for the year on paying gratuities, none of the budget for "clearance of gratuity arrears" and less than 30% of the pension budget. In addition, it had spent less than 60% of the salary and wages budget. He has been paying half salaries and sometimes a quarter. Pensions are also not being paid on time.

In January of this year the Governor apologised for not having paid the pension arrears by the end of last year as he had promised many times during his election campaign.

The 2024 budget of the state is N567 billion and a massive 84% is to be spent on capital expenditure. This includes borrowing of N400bn. Only an eighth of this would be enough to pay off all the salary arrears of the state.

The Labour Party Governor of Abia State is continuing to borrow from its workers and pensioners to fund his capital programme. The state needs improved infrastructure, but this should not be at the cost of not paying the workers and pensioners their meagre benefits.

## The Agbekoya Rebellion And Peasant Struggles Against Increased Taxation In Southwest Nigeria- BY IZIELEN AGBON

Last year, Tinubu set up the Presidential Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms Committee to review and advise on reforms to shape Nigeria's fiscal policy and tax system. The general consensus among Tinubu's advisers is that peasants should face increased land seizure for foreign companies, lower prices for export crops, with the introduction of marketing boards, increased taxation, and lower disposable income. Lower disposable income will lead to increased peasant resistance to Tinubu's policies of increased rural taxation.

During the Agbekoya Rebellion of 1968-1970, peasants struggled for lower direct taxes because this gave them with more disposable household income. Cash income was their only means of raising their standard of living.

During the civil war period, Nigerian peasants were faced with higher taxes, low producer prices and high import prices. In 1967, the cocoa board's domestic prices stood at £91 per ton against a world price of £250 per ton. The effective tax per adult was increased to £6.00. This included the head tax, the development fund contribution, the compulsory saving deposit, education rates and water rates. The taxation of women was also reintroduced in Southwest Nigeria...

President Tinubu and his men are no Awoists. They do not believe in free education, free healthcare, cooperative agriculture, social democratic ideology and sustainable development-oriented policies aimed at benefiting the Nigerian masses. Rather, they believe in the IMF neo-liberal policies of higher petrol prices, devaluation of the naira, stagnant wages, high unemployment, cheap labour and higher taxes for Nigerian workers and peasants that will generate higher income for their ruling class friends and cronies. They do not care for the rest of us. The possibility that Tinubu will be able to walk into a circle of revolting peasants and make a deal is very low.

The full article from which the above is extracted is available from:

<https://www.nationalrecord.com.ng/the-agbekoya-rebellion-and-peasant-struggles-against-increased-taxation-in-southwest-nigeria-by-izielen-agbon/>



## What Do We Mean By Neo-colonialism? - TOKUNBO OKE

Like the talk of deformed and degenerated workers states, I think that neo-colonialism is a frozen orthodoxy. If the working definition is still that outlined in Kwame Nkrumah's book *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* where he talks of puppet rulers, puppet states etc. However, to say that it does not exist in some shape or form is mistaken.

I prefer to see Neo-colonialism, like Capital, as a relationship not a thing. It describes the relationship between stronger and weaker ruling classes. The weaker ruling classes occupy a status embodying both domination and autonomy.

The degree of autonomy exercised will depend upon the political and economic power of weaker ruling classes: the Nigerian ruling class has much more autonomy and has more ability to push back against imperialist demands than the Ghanaian, Togolese or Beninoid ruling classes. On the other hand, the Nigerian state can also be used to directly threaten other states to help to keep them in line with the requirements of international capital. One example recently was the threat to invade Niger over the coup in July 2023.

Autonomy and competition between the larger states gives weaker ruling classes in neo-colonial states the ability to shift alliances when the old relationships are no longer beneficial. This is happening in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. There is a shift of the political tectonic plates from France and the US to Russia and the newer imperialist elements. This is within the context of inter-imperialist rivalry over access to African resources.

However, the true test for these governments will be how they extricate themselves from the straight - jacket of the CFA Franc, which was the corner stone of French neo-colonial domination over its ex-colonies. We also need to see a move to real reductions in the levels of poverty and unemployment and so a move to less unequal societies in these countries.



## One Month General Strike in Chad



There was a widely supported general strike in Chad that lasted for a month from 20th February, 2024. This was over the military government increasing the price of fuel by 40% in the middle of February and the coming to an end of the three year social pact between some trade unions and the government without many agreed actions having been implemented. Indefinite strikes were also held more briefly in the education and health sectors from mid-March.

Although the trade unions were not able to win their key demand over the increase in the price of fuel they do appear to have won a number of concessions from the government. However, the social pact signed between the government and some trade unions in October 2021 remains to be implemented, the trade union leaders previously stated that “of the 63 points, only 8 are fully implemented and 33 partially implemented”. In addition, the minimum wage has not been increased since 2011.

The first round of the presidential elections are due on 6th May, 2024. It is hoped that the trade unions remain resolute during this time especially with the tensions around the assassination of a leader of the opposition and a number of others on 28th February. Once the current leader (son of the former long-time dictator) is elected president, as expected, it will be more difficult to put the government under pressure.

For more details see:

<https://socialistlabour.com.ng/2024/03/25/workers-in-chad-show-fight-against-an-increase-in-the-price-of-fuel-and-other-issues/>

## African Unity Can't Take Place on France's Terms

-An interview with Ndongo Samba Sylla, early February, 2024

A useful analysis of recent developments across French speaking West Africa by someone who has spoken at Socialist Labour public meetings, but it is more of a nationalist interpretation of events. This involves relationships between countries and peoples.

Class and poverty are barely mentioned, inequality and trade unions not at all. So Ndongo talks about “impoverished countries” rather than poverty and inequality within these countries. We need to extend this analysis to talk about class struggle across West Africa, especially given the month long general strike in Chad.

“In Niger specifically, my feeling is that it was initially a palace coup, but it quickly took an anti-imperialist turn in the face of widespread popular support boosted by the immediacy and harshness of the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the “international community.” The Niger putschists certainly couldn't have imagined the huge popularity of their coup.”

“But transfers of profits and dividends are substantial, a reality that is usually coupled with the theft and transfer abroad of resources.” – so as in Nigeria, most of the capital flight is by the local corrupt elite.

Ndongo provides no link between “security challenges” and poverty/inequality. So no explanation is provided for the rise of “jihadist terrorism” (an unfortunate term which mirrors the explanation of the very imperialists that he wants us to fight against).



To read the full interview see:

<https://jacobin.com/2024/02/french-neocolonialism-coups-west-africa>

## Niger Junta Now Demands US Troops Leave



The military junta in the Republic of Niger is again showing that African governments can stand up to the imperialist powers – if their politicians choose to do so.

The French troops all left Niger by the end of last year. In March, the junta also demanded that the US troops should also leave.

## From the newspaper of the Communist Party of Republic of Benin:

There was a warning strike in the education sector on Thursday March 7, 2024; and on Monday March 18. As a result, the Council of Ministers acceded to certain demands. Earlier, movements of protest and strike by local government officials in certain municipalities, and the government (by a note joint circular from the ministers of finance and decentralization) recognized the legitimacy of demands and ordered their satisfaction.

The populations of young people, already hungry, exasperated by police repression, storm police stations (Tchaourou, Kalalé) and recover their confiscated motorbikes. Likewise, farmers and sellers that were stunned by unjust taxes in the markets, as in Hêtin, in the Commune of Dangbo, organise protests.

These results indicate one and only one thing:

Only Struggle Pays! Only Struggle Liberates!

## Protests grow against sexual harassment in Cameroon

In early February, scores of women and men took to social media to report their experiences of sexual harassment, assault, and other abuses, all at the hands of the same alleged predator, a well-known businessman Hervé Bopda.

Eventually, he was arrested by the end of January. We hope that this will begin to make a change in Cameroon.

For more details see:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/01/camerouns-metoo-moment>

## Wars In Ukraine and Gaza



How do the wars in Ukraine and Gaza fit into a world of competition between the imperialist powers? Why our solidarity is with workers' struggles in all countries and not with the governments of these countries.

In both case it is the common people who are suffering. In Gaza we have genocide against the Palestinians. In Ukraine we have massive refugees and the economy has been destroyed. Rather than putting Ukraine and Palestine in separate silos, it is important to develop an overall analysis of the way that both conflicts are driven by a global


system of competing companies overseen by their respective states. This is imperialism.

<https://www.rs21.org.uk/2024/02/28/from-ukraine-to-gaza-imperialism-resistance-and-solidarity/>

For more background on the rise of Israel and the oppression of Palestinians, read this free pamphlet:

<https://ivavalleybooks.com/2021/05/15/palestine-resistance-revolution-and-the-struggle-for-freedom/>






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## Summary of Workers Strikes - March 2024

*We need your assistance to ensure that this monthly report is comprehensive. Please submit details of any strikes in your state or community. All these strikes need our support and solidarity. We call on all trade union branches to send messages of support and to organise solidarity visits to any strikes in their localities.*

**ASUU members at Benue State University** have been on strike since 2nd February. They are demanding increased funding for the university to address issues such as promotion, annual increments and earned academic arrears.

Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the **Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU)** and **Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and other Associated Institutions (NASU)** commenced a seven-day warning strike on 18th March demand the payment of members' withheld four months salaries since the strike in 2022. The unions are now threatening an indefinite strike.

The **National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT)** also embarked on a warning strike over the same issue for three days from 20th March.

In October last year Tinubu promised to pay four months of the eight months arrears to ASUU members for their strike in 2022. This was eventually paid in February 2024.

**The Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria, JUSUN, in Osun State**, declared indefinite strike action from 23 November. The strike was suspend after nearly 3.5 months from 11th March. The strike followed seizures of its members wardrobe allowance, suspension of some colleagues, and the Chief Judge's refusal to lift embargo on workers' training.

## Socialist Labour-JOIN US

The economic, environmental and Covid-19 crises show that society is a conflict between two classes: the vast majority who create the wealth, and a tiny minority who profit from our work. Reform attempts have failed: the only solution is a truly democratic socialist society. The corrupt elite will only give up their power if forced to do so. We need a mass democratic movement to bring about socialism. Events, such as Russia in 1917, the January 2012 protests in Nigeria and the mass uprisings in Sudan and Algeria from 2019, begin to show what we need.

For more details of the basic ideas and policies of Socialist Labour see:

[www.socialistlabour.com.ng/about-us/](http://www.socialistlabour.com.ng/about-us/)

Join the Socialist Labour supporters WhatsApp group by clicking this link:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/KiOyN3OKGBllvtuh0ycDaU>

We would love to receive letters, comments or suggestions from our readers. We want to hear from you with suggestions for articles for our future editions or questions on any articles in this issue. Please contact us via WhatsApp of 0916 693 3998

We especially welcome news about protests and strikes in your community or town.

## Socialist Labour Depends on its Supporters for Finances

Socialist Labour depends on its members and supporters for funds. We need more financial support so that we can be more active, expand and grow. If you are able to make a modest financial contribution that would be really helpful. We would also like all readers of this Bulletin to consider fully joining Socialist Labour by paying monthly subscriptions.

The standard rate is N1,000 a month, with a lower rate of N500 for students or unemployed and N5,000 for higher paid comrades. We can all afford something - every little helps.

Please make your contributions to the following bank account:

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Account Name: Aborisade Albert Femi

The account is only used for Socialist Labour purposes.

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**Workplace address/university/school:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trade union:** \_\_\_\_\_

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