

## Call for solidarity: defend the right to strike in the UK

The UK government is currently attempting to rush measures through parliament intended to severely limit the right to strike in several sectors. Attached is a briefing with more information.

The Trades Union Congress is campaigning to stop the 'Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill' from becoming law.

**On 1 February**, the TUC will be holding a [day of action to protect the right to strike](#). On the same day, several hundred thousand workers from sectors including the civil service (PCS), education (NEU and UCU), and transport (RMT and ASLEF) unions will take strike action as part of their industrial disputes on pay, jobs, and conditions.

**On 30 January** Members of Parliament will debate and vote on the Bill.

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak says:

*"This draconian bill is a full-frontal attack on the right to strike – and the government is trying to steamroller it through parliament, without proper consultation or scrutiny.*

*"This spiteful legislation would mean that when workers democratically vote to strike, they can be forced to work and sacked if they don't comply.*

*"Make no mistake – this is undemocratic, unworkable and likely illegal.*

*"It's time the government got its priorities straight. Instead of scheming up new ways to attack the right to strike, ministers should get pay rising across the economy – starting with a decent pay rise for workers across the public sector."*

### **The TUC asks sister centres to support them in their campaign by undertaking one or more of the following solidarity actions:**

- A written statement from your organisation condemning the legislation, supporting those taking industrial action, and supporting the wider campaign. Please send this to the TUC by **Friday, 27 January** for use ahead of the Parliamentary vote on Monday, 30 January.
- A video message from your organisation posted to social media on the morning of **Tuesday, 1 February**. *(If possible, please begin the message with*

*the line "Solidarity from [your union] in [your country] to all workers in the UK defending their right to strike today."*)

- Encouraging your sectoral affiliates in public service, education, and transport to send bilateral messages of support to PCS, NEU, UCU, RMT, and ASLEF.
- Writing to the British ambassador in your country condemning the legislation.

**If possible, please also send copies of statements, videos, and letters to British embassies to the TUC via: [rmaisey@tuc.org.uk](mailto:rmaisey@tuc.org.uk)**

### **Some facts about existing anti-union legislation**

The UK already has the most severe anti-union laws in Western Europe. These include:

- Having to undertake postal ballots of members before taking industrial action.
- Requiring a majority 'yes' vote on a majority turnout - with higher thresholds in some sectors – for a strike to be legal.
- Giving at least two weeks' notice before any strike.
- Companies can hire agency workers to break strikes

If unions trip up on any of these hurdles, employers can stop strike action in the courts or seek compensation.

### **Some facts about the new legislation**

This Bill currently being debated in parliament will allow ministers to impose minimum service levels (MSLs) on services in six sectors (health; education; fire & rescue; transport; decommissioning of nuclear installations; and border security).

This Bill will do nothing to help workers, or to resolve current industrial disputes. And it will do nothing to support those using underfunded public services.

- It is an attack on a fundamental human right – the right to strike.
- This legislation is draconian: it could lead to individual workers being sacked for taking part in industrial action that was supported in a democratic process. Workers in the UK have no fundamental or constitutional right to strike.
- It is counter-productive: the government's own analysis has warned that it could lead to more strikes.
- And it is unnecessary: it is already standard practice for life saving cover to be agreed by unions during industrial disputes that effect health and rescue services.
- Trade unions will be required to take 'all reasonable steps' to force their members to cross picket lines to maintain minimum services at risk of paying large fines.
- The significant risk of dismissal for workers who wish to speak up about their pay and conditions will do nothing to resolve the current staffing shortages within public services.

- It is being rushed through Parliament with huge amounts of detail being left to secondary legislation and yet the government expects the first minimum service regulations could come into force as soon as the summer.
- It hands excessive powers to the Secretary of State to define what services are affected and the level of minimum service to be provided.