

Ambulance workers in UK say they will strike later this month

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London, December 7 (RHC)-- Ambulance workers in the United Kingdom say they will strike two times later this month over pay and conditions, as the British government struggles to deal with a string of strikes in recent months. In a statement issued Tuesday, the GMB, a general trade union in the UK that

says has more than 500,000 members, announced that more than 10,000 ambulance workers across England and Wales would strike later this month over pay and conditions.

The strike will add to widespread industrial action across Britain's health service over the incoming Christmas period. The statement added that GMB members, including paramedics, emergency care assistants, and call handlers would go on strike at nine regional ambulance services on December 21 and 28.

The announcement was made at a time when workers across a wide range of sectors are currently taking, or planning to take, industrial action in the UK as inflation exceeds wage increases, and with the economy likely already in recession. "The last thing they want to do is take strike action, but the government has left them with no choice," said GMB's National Secretary Rachel Harrison.

Unison and Unite trade unions have already said that ambulance workers who are members would strike on December 21 over a pay dispute. "Our priority is to ensure emergency services continue to operate for those who need it and limit disruption," said British Health Minister Steve Barclay in a statement, advising people to continue using online emergency services for urgent advice and to call the emergency number in life-threatening situations.

On Monday, the UK's National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, known as the RMT, rejected a pay increase offer by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) aimed at preventing strikes over the Christmas period.

"The RDG is offering 4% in 2022 and 2023 which is conditional on RMT members accepting vast changes to working practices, huge job losses, driver only operated (DOO) trains on all companies and the closure of all ticket offices," said Mick Lynch, the RMT general secretary. The RDG had earlier promised to support pay increases of up to eight percent, covering 2022 and 2023 pay awards, while delivering much-needed reforms.

The developments come as hundreds of thousands of workers across many sections of the British economy are planning to go on strike later in December and in January, with strikes planned for every day until Christmas. These protesting workers could be joined by more than 33,000 firefighters and control room staff, who start voting today on whether to strike over pay.

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