

Massmart workers commence indefinite strike

By Nqobile Dlodla

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Thousands of workers, disgruntled over low wages and changes to terms and conditions of employment, went on strike on Friday at companies owned by Massmart in South Africa, the South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (Saccawu) said.



Saccawu, an affiliate of union Cosatu, said the indefinite strike is expected to draw more than 18,000 members across the country. "We expect all the members to join the strike," said Saccawu spokesperson Sithembale Tshwete, adding some workers started picketing outside some Massmart stores at 4am.

“ A large group of striking workers are gathered at the Makro in Woodmead as part of their demonstrations against group companies owned by Walmart-led Massmart Holdings in South Africa. [@KayaNews pic.twitter.com/XrcwZd0T9](#)— Kat Sekhotho (@KatSekhotho) [November 19, 2021](#) ”

The union has said it had exhausted all efforts to resolve labour disputes with Walmart-led Massmart, which owns Game, Makro and Builders Warehouse stores, and was left with no option but to go on strike.



Saccawu to start indefinite strike at Massmart

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The disputes include a wage dispute at Builders, with unions demanding an increase of R500 but Massmart is only offering an increase of R320. The union is also disputing unilateral restructuring and changes to terms and conditions of employment, which includes imposing a 40-hour working week with no premiums.

The union also wants workers who lost jobs as a result of restructuring at general merchandise Game chain to be reinstated. Massmart has said it had identified alternative jobs for those workers.

Tshwete said there were no immediate plans for the union to resume talks with Massmart.

The cost of striking

Massmart said the strike could cost striking workers up to 25% of their November wages, if the industrial action was to last for a week.

"It is difficult not to conclude that the... industrial action represents a Saccawu leadership power play that is not necessarily in the best interests of their members," Massmart said.

Massmart said contingency plans have been implemented to ensure continued operations, which includes deploying experienced contract employees to its stores.

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