

Textile strike looms

About 60 000 clothing workers could begin a national strike in two weeks if last-ditch talks with the clothing manufacturers industry tomorrow, 26 August 2009, fail to secure a pay rise of R70 week.

By [Anna Majavu](#) 25 Aug 2009

The Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (Sactwu) began balloting members for a strike yesterday after wage talks collapsed last week.

The votes will be counted within 10 days but Sactwu general secretary Andre Kriel says employers have a last chance to prevent a national strike at an urgent meeting tomorrow.

“We will seriously consider what the employers have to say. We prefer a settlement, not a strike,” Kriel told a press conference yesterday.

Sactwu wants a R70-a-week increase. Employers have instead offered 5%. This works out to R19.95 a week for the lowest paid workers and R32,32 a week for the highest paid workers, who earn R646.30 a week.

Kriel condemned “employers’ refusal to close the wage gap between workers in the cities and rural areas” He said workers in factories in Botshabelo, Isithebe, Ladysmith, Newcastle and QwaQwa earned only R39 a week.

“About 80% of the workforce in clothing and textile factories is female. Many of these employees are single mothers,” he said.

Kriel said the union was also against a new proposal by employers that workers should not be paid overtime unless they had already worked a full week.

This means that a worker who is off sick on a Wednesday but works the following Sunday will not get any overtime for the Sunday work, Kriel said.

The looming strike comes amid an outcry by the Congress of SA Trade Unions against the importation of “cheap, low quality Chinese textile goods”.

The labour federation says the “tsunami of cheap Chinese goods” into the country stifles the local textile industry and will also wipe out thousands of jobs.

Source: Sowetan

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