

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

University strike in Mexico in seventh week

Negotiations are at an impasse in the month-and-a-half-long strike at the University of Sonora in northern Mexico. The strike, by non-academic employees of the University represented by the Sonora University Employees Union (STEUS), began April 3. At issue are wages and housing benefits for employees.

Academic personnel at the University postponed a walkout, originally scheduled for May 14, until the end of the month.

Meanwhile, academics at the College of Postgraduate Studies in the Mexico City suburb of Coyoacan (COLPOS) protested over the weekend over the refusal of government authorities to equalize their salaries with staff at the Advanced Research Center (CINVESTAV). Salary parity had been negotiated eight years ago but was never implemented.

COLPOS academics have been on strike for more than three months. On May 14, five of the strikers went on a hunger strike.

Nurses to strike in Peru

Nurses employed by EsSalud, Peru's public health system, were warned last week that nurses who join a national strike called by the Public Health Nurses Union (SINESSS) set to take place this week would be disciplined. EsSalud claims that all the issues of the

strike have been settled. Any other demands, declared EsSalud, are simply irrational.

SNESSS leaders confirmed the May 18 walkout of indefinite duration. For its part, EsSalud announced that it would replace striking nurses with strikebreakers. It also appealed for nurses to cross their own picket lines.

EsSalud officials have accused SINESSS of blackmailing the nation precisely while the country is confronting the AH1N1 flu virus (swine flu).

Argentine bank workers protest

On Friday, May 15, bank workers in Buenos Aires walked off their jobs, marched through downtown and rallied to press for their wage demands. The union that represents the bank employees reported that 85 percent of its members joined the walkout.

The bank employees are demanding a 25 percent wage increase. The banks, which are negotiating jointly, offered a 17 percent raise, supposedly matching the rate of inflation for 2008.

Banana workers strike in Colombia

The strike against 296 plantations by banana workers in Uraba, Colombia, is now in its second week, with negotiations stalled. The issue is wages. SINTRAIGRO, the union that represents the strikers, announced on Sunday that it was holding out for a one-year increase of 9.2 percent while the employers have offered 7.8 percent per year over the life of a two-year contract.

Ecuador: Workers to protest decree limiting white-collar bargaining rights

Workers plan to rally May 20 in Quito to protest a decree by President Rafael Correa. Executive Decree 1701 limits bargaining rights for white-collar workers. Correa, who issued the decree on April 30, four days after being reelected to a second term, claims the decree merely targets abuses, such as the practice of transferring a job to a relative upon the retirement of a public employee. Union leaders denounced the decree. “The government intends to eliminate collective bargaining rights for public employees,” declared oil union leader Diego Cano.

The United Workers Front (FUT), the main union federation in Ecuador, has called on workers to rally in Quito this week and has threatened Correa with a general strike.

Protest over firings at Washington state radio station

Workers at the Spanish-language radio station KDNA in Granger, Washington, walked off the job May 16 to protest the firing of two fellow workers for attempting to join a union. Scores of listeners showed up to support the picketers.

Workers contend that conflicts escalated when the board of directors hired Maria Fernandez to take the place of 29-year veteran executive director Ricardo Garcia. KDNA’s origins are in Washington state’s farm labor movement.

California aerospace workers strike to defend overtime

Some 180 workers at the Cytec Industries plant in Orange County, California, launched a strike May 15 to protest management’s attempt to take away overtime.

“I think they are using the economy to try to get all

this,” Henry Victor, a member of the International Association of Machinists and a member of the negotiating team, told the *Orange County Register*. “This company is trying to force mandatory overtime without overtime pay. You’d have to work 60 hours a week to get a Saturday off.”

A company spokesperson declined to go into details about the negotiations, merely referring to their demand as an attempt at “some good-faith exploration.”



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