

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Mexico: Steel workers strike in Michoacán

Over 3,500 workers employed by Arcelor Mittal in the port of Lázaro Cárdenas went on strike on Saturday, August 7, after rejecting a 7 percent wage offer. According to Mario García Ortiz, an officer of Section 271 of the National Union of Miners and Metal Workers (SNTMMSRM), management had proposed 5 more pesos in food subsidies, one more vacation day, and a bonus of \$3,500 pesos for each worker in return for the sacking of 700.

García also indicated that the company demanded increasing labor flexibility so that it could transfer workers from two other affiliates of Arcelor Mittal into the plant, as a way of further eliminating jobs. He also denounced the Mexican Labor Ministry, whose officials had intervened on Mittal's behalf during the negotiations. Despite all this, the union was prepared to delay a strike call for another week until they received Mittal's wage offer, which the union considered "insulting."

Arcelor Mittal used to be known as Sicartsa, a government-owned steel mill. On April 20, 2006, Mexican security forces broke into the plant, which was occupied by striking workers, and killed two of them. As a result, workers remained on strike for another four months. In December 2006 Sicartsa was sold to Arcelor Mittal.

Labor protests continues in Honduras

The Honduran airline TACA suspended all flights into the country as a result of a strike by meteorologists, which has closed all of the country's airports. The strikers are demanding the return of deposed president Manuel Zelaya.

The 95 meteorologists began their strike last Thursday, demanding the "restoration of the democratic system" in Honduras. "We have begun a strike of indefinite duration demanding the restoration of the democratic system that has been broken by the state," declared Ramón García, vice president of the National Association of Meteorologists.

The military has occupied public hospitals and clinics in an attempt to end a strike by 8,000 public health workers. On August 7, the strikers marched to the streets of Tegucigalpa demanding Zelaya's return. Some 5,000 workers rallied at the US embassy, demanding that US President Barack Obama intervene on Zelaya's behalf. "This is the fourth time that we rally at the US embassy," declared labor leader, Israel Salinas. "We are now saying that enough time has passed for the US to take the strongest of measures against those that carried out the coup headed by Roberto Micheletti."

Attending the embassy rally were trade union representatives from Argentina, Brazil and Spain. In another part of the city hundreds of strikers and their supporters marched on the home of Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, denouncing his support for the usurpers.

Dominican Republic: Public health workers on strike

The strike by 14,000 doctors and nurses employed by the Dominican public health system is now entering its third week and is scheduled to end this Wednesday. The strike, which began on July 29, was originally set to last five days, but it has been extended twice. The doctors' union is demanding that the starting wage be raised to US\$1,600. The government of President Leonel Fernández has declared that it will begin hiring strikebreakers this week. Under the government plan, military doctors and nurses are to be brought in to staff public hospitals and clinics. In addition, the government expects to hire several hundred private doctors under contract.

On August 7, health minister Bautista Rojas Gómez threatened the strikers with disciplinary action. "From today on we are going to take drastic measures," said Rojas.

Health care workers strike three New Jersey nursing homes

Some 375 workers at three nursing homes operated by Omni Health in Union City, Jersey City and Guttenberg went on strike August 7 over wages and benefits. The members of Service Employees International Union Local 1199 have been in negotiations for more than two years without coming to terms with Avery Eisenreich, the owner of the three homes.

Workers currently make less than \$7.90 an hour. "It's either \$8.50 and benefits or \$10.50 and nothing," striker Tameika Davenport told the *Jersey Journal* concerning the union's demands. Management brought in replacement workers to perform union work during the walkout, which the union limited to just three days.



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