

Workers Struggles: The Americas

7 October 2014

Latin America

Protests in Mexico mark anniversary of massacre

Students and young workers across Mexico marched on October 2 in remembrance of the 1968 massacre of students at Tlatelolco Square and to protest attacks on Mexican workers and youth.

Demonstrations took place in 12 Mexican states. The protests attracted a wide section of Mexican workers and youth, including college and high school students, teachers, teaching college students, as well as trade union members. Outside of Mexico City some of the biggest demonstrations took place in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero, centers of teacher militancy. Thousands also marched in Jalisco, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Hidalgo, Baja California, Nayarit, Morelos and Tamaulipas

One of the main issues raised by demonstrators was the assassination of several students and the disappearances of 57 [38 are still missing] others at the Teachers College in Avotzinapa, Guerrero state. Others carried signs in solidarity with the strike by students and professors of the National Polytechnic Institute against a government attack on academic standards.

Protesters chanted, “We will not forget October 2 [1968]”. “No more government killings,” “If they do not let us dream, we will not let them sleep.”

Factory shutdown ends three-year strike in Coahuila, Mexico

The Tres Estrellas textile plant, established in Mexico since 1864 and one of the oldest textile plants in the

Americas, has announced that it is closing in the wake of a strike that lasted more than three years. The closing follows the announcement that Tres Estrellas is bankrupt. Tres Estrellas agreed to give the 265 workers severance pay of 50 million pesos (about US\$4 million).

The company, government officials and representatives of the union at the plant, the so-called Progressive Workers Union, arranged the settlement, a pittance, even by Mexican standards. The state government offered food and education grants to induce the workers to agree to end the strike.

Paraguay doctors strike

Public health doctors launched a 72-hour strike on October 6 over wages and working conditions. The strikers are also demanding an increase in government investments in clinics and hospitals, in medicines and hospital equipment.

Negotiations with the government broke down last week. The walkout is taking place after four weeks of slowdowns and cuts, including two-hour morning and evening strikes. The health workers are members of the Federation of Doctors Unions (CNGMU).

Medical workers say that the strike has been forced on them by the deterioration of medical services in public health, including shortages in medicines.

Strike by bank employees in Argentina and Brazil

Employees of the Argentine Central Bank (BCRA) walked off their jobs on October 1 for one week to

enforce a collective bargaining agreement with the bank that was negotiated early this year. The agreement provided wage increases. On Wednesday, the strikers held a rally at the bank.

Among the issues raised by the strike are the defense of pensions and health care for retirees, and an agreement to formally employ its temporary and contract workers as full-time employees.

At the same time, tens of thousands of commercial bank workers went on strike on September 30 across Brazil demanding better wages and working conditions. The employees are demanding a 12.5 percent wage increase, while the banks are offering 7.5 percent.

United States

time, overtime pay and student employment, all in a new five-year deal.

It is the first time workers have gone on strike at the plant, which produces rubber-impregnated glass for a variety of industries and applications.



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Workers strike RHI Monofrax in New York state

Members of the Service Employees International Union and the International Association of Machinists have struck Austrian-owned RHI Monofrax in Falconer, New York. The workers are fighting draconian cuts to health care and pensions.

The 130 workers went on strike last week after rejecting the company's latest contract offer. Earlier this year, the company laid off 70 workers citing a slowdown in business. No talks are currently scheduled.

The company sells supplies used to help clean up nuclear waste to the federal government.

Canada

Toronto area glass workers strike

Workers at NGF Canada's glass plant in Guelph, Ontario, west of Toronto, went on strike last week after voting to reject employer demands for concessions in numerous areas in the latest contract proposal.

The 26 strikers are represented by the Workers United Canada Council union and their last five-year contract expired at the beginning of June. The range of concessions sought by NGF include pensions, vacation