

Mexican auto parts workers set to strike if wage demand is not met

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Mexican auto parts workers set to strike if wage demand is not met

Representatives for nearly 5,000 workers at two auto parts manufacturing plants in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico have submitted a demand for a 30 percent raise. Currently, the daily wage at Aptiv plants 1 and 2 ranges from 140 pesos (US\$7.35) to 150 pesos (US\$7.88).

Aptiv, which spun off from parts maker Delphi in September to concentrate on “active safety features, connected services and autonomous driving as well as the platforms needed to run them,” according to its web site, fired 1,500 workers last year while increasing the exploitation of those remaining. “Everything is going up for the workers, they increase the work, many times they do the labor of two workers,” union secretary general María de Dolores Zúñiga Vázquez told reporters, then added that “the strike isn’t convenient, we don’t want to but it’s necessary, we want the raise.”

The workers’ union and management are presently meeting with the Arbitration and Conciliation Board (JCA) with a deadline of February 2; however, the union has decided on January 19 as the strike date if there is no progress. At the same time, Zúñiga Vázquez has already admitted that the union would accept 15 percent.

Honduran legal and forensic workers protest over salary, workload demands

Employees of the Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences Center of the Honduran Public Ministry held a protest in Tegucigalpa January 11. The main reason for the mobilization was the demand for a salary readjustment.

A spokesperson for the workers told reporters, “We have been the object of multiple abuses by the Public Ministry.” She noted that their skills helped to clear up important cases and that, despite many limitations, they have carried out their work. She complained as well of overwork and inadequate pay.

The workers have sent a petition to “the maximum authorities so that they can resolve the problems in a positive manner.” If not, they will call a national strike.

Strike by workers at Costa Rican pineapple plantation met by police repression

Workers at the Exportaciones Nortenñas pineapple plantation in Los Chiles, Costa Rica went on strike January 9 with a number of demands including the end of layoffs and firings and reinstatement of those workers along with immediate payments, a raise in conformity with minimum wage laws, and an end to persecution of the Private Sector Workers Syndicate (SITRASEP).

Among the last-named are intimidation and threats against union officials and workers, as well as a series of firings in November and December. Other demands include vacations with pay, full pay for holidays (instead of payment for only four hours) and prior notice of layoffs.

Los Chiles is in Alajuela province, near the border with Nicaragua. Since the strike began, immigration police have detained over 60 Nicaraguans who they claim might be in Costa Rica illegally, and also cited a supposed warning of a possible arson threat.

A SITRASEP statement said, “We believe that it is nothing more and nothing less than an operation of repression coordinated between the Public Force, the Migration Police, the Ministry of Labor, the government and the pineapple businessmen to criminalize the just claim of the labor rights of these pineapple workers and dismantle the workers’ strike movement,” and demanded the immediate release of all the detainees.

Chilean grounds maintenance workers strike over failed negotiations

Grounds maintenance workers in the northern Chilean city of Copiapo began an indefinite strike January 10 to protest the failure of negotiations with their employer, Siglo Verde (Green Century). The firm has a green area maintenance contract with the city and employs 169 workers.

On December 29, the workers approved strike authorization if negotiations did not bring a favorable result. According to the union, there have been no talks between the parties since management refused to accept union bargainers’ proposals.

Presently, the workers meet every day at the downtown Plaza de Armas to hold protests.

Pilots in Argentina announce strike plans if salary demand is not met

Denouncing the “unusual intransigence that impedes any kind of rapprochement between the parties in parity negotiations,” on January 11

the Líneas Aéreas Airline Pilots Association (APLA) announced plans for 24-hour a strike this week against LAN Argentina. The pilots had already delayed some flights at the Metropolitan Aeropark in Buenos Aires by holding assemblies from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm.

The statement claimed that, despite the “extreme prudence” that APLA representatives showed in negotiations, the company’s salary offer was “totally insufficient.” It added that if an understanding is not reached by January 16, the pilots will paralyze all programmed operations.

The statement further pointed out, “Day after day, while the holding company estimates unprecedented profit margins for 2018, inflation accentuates the loss of our purchasing power, aggravating the situation.”

Argentine lifeguards strike for wage raise

Lifeguards in coastal resort towns in Buenos Aires Province walked off the job on January 11 to press their salary demands. The strike by the over 300 lifeguards in Pinamar, Ostende, Valeria del Mar and Cariló was called the day after the Seaside Resort Concessionaires Association (ACB) refused to attend a meeting at Mar del Plata Labor Ministry to negotiate wage demands.

The lifeguards’ union had called for a 26 percent wage raise, which Pinamar Lifeguards Association (AGP) head Fernando Espinach called “a survival demand.” The ACB offer was barely more than half: 14.5 percent.

Lifeguards left notices at their stations and marched along the beach beating bombos and warning vacationers not to go into the water. Espinach told reporters that the nonattendance by the ACB was “a bad omen” and that “we see ourselves forced to take this measure.”

The strike was planned to last 24 hours, with the lifeguards working over the weekend. However, the Labor Ministry issued a tripartite “obligatory conciliation” decree for January 15, and the lifeguards returned to their posts by 4:30.

Golf Channel workers strike in Hawaii

Workers involved in video and audio production at the Golf Channel in Hawaii walked off the job Sunday over stalled contract negotiations. The action led to limited coverage for the Sony Open and golf events in the Bahamas and Florida.

The technicians have been in contract negotiations for nine months. Some three-dozen members of the International Association of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE) picketed outside Waialae Country Club in support of the Golf Channel’s technical crew.

The main issue is wages. The workers want to achieve parity with other professionals in the industry. Workers rejected a previous management offer by a decisive 83 percent vote.

New York nuclear power plant workers authorize strike

Workers at the Indian Point nuclear power plant outside of Peekskill, New York have voted to authorize a strike amidst continuing uncertainty over their fate once the facility closes in 2021. Management says it has put in place a contingency plan in case workers strike.

The four-year contract expires on Wednesday for the 300 workers, member of the Utility Workers Union of America. A major issue is the role of the union in the two-year decommissioning process that will follow the shutdown. The nuclear fuel will have to be removed from the reactors and placed in cement dry casks for temporary storage.

Mediation in seventh week of Missouri nursing home strike

The Service Employees International Union and negotiators representing Christian Care Home entered into mediated talks January 11 as the strike by 100 nursing home workers in Ferguson, Missouri enters its seventh week. Nursing assistants, dietary care workers and housekeepers walked off the job on December 1 to protest wages and a number of unfair labor practice grievances.

The median income for a nursing assistant is a mere \$9.65 an hour. The strikers demand for an across the board 75 cent raise has been met by management’s refusal to offer any increase.

Workers are also protesting unilateral changes to staffing, hours and scheduling. Management has also barred workers from taking vacations.

Missouri’s nursing homes have been impacted by a 3.5 percent cut to Medicaid funding after Governor Eric Greitens vetoed a bill that would have allocated additional funding to long-term care facilities and in-home services. Nursing homes are also bracing for more Medicaid and Medicare cuts in the wake of the Trump tax plan passed by Congress.

One-day strike at Chicago nursing home

Workers at the Veracare Burbank nursing home in Chicago staged a one-day strike on Martin Luther King Day to protest lack of movement in ongoing contract talks. The workers, members of the Service Employees International Union, are opposing company attempts to strip long-time workers of their seniority.

The SEIU has limited its actions to holding token strikes and the filing of unfair labor practice charges. The SEIU has threatened another one-day strike in spring if management does not change its position.

Quebec aluminum workers locked out

1,030 workers at aluminum giant Alcoa Corporation’s ABI smelter in Becancour, Quebec were locked out last week after their last contract expired with no new agreement in place and within 24 hours of voting against the company’s latest offer.

Workers organized under the United Steelworkers of America (USW) had previously voted to reject a contract offer containing concession demands on seniority and a two-tiered pension plan that was unfavorable to new hires.

The company has said it will keep workers locked out until further notice and is using management to maintain one production line during the lockout. Union leaders, who have denounced the company for its heavy handed tactics, say they believe the company is trying to drive up the price of aluminum with the lockout, which they expect to last for up to three months.

Northern Ontario medical staff vote to strike

Around 65 workers at the Port Arthur Health Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario have voted to go on strike after their last contract expired at the end of 2017 and negotiations have failed to produce a new agreement.

According to Unifor union negotiators bargaining on behalf of workers, there is a lack of permanent positions at the company, which it says has an over-reliance on casual work that offers no job security. Workers at the center are employed as medical aides, secretaries and in record keeping but according to their union are paid well below their counterparts in Thunder Bay.

Despite the intransigence of the company, the union has applied for conciliation, saying they would only call a strike as a last resort.



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