

## Three-day strike by Mexican teachers in Chiapas and Oaxaca

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

### Three-day strike by Mexican teachers in Chiapas and Oaxaca

Teachers in Mexico's southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca struck for 72 hours beginning April 30. The three days included distribution of flyers, marches, occupations of government buildings, delegations with petitions, and demonstrations. Over 20,000 congregated in front of the government palace in the city of Oaxaca, and thousands demonstrated in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas.

The mobilizations were called by sections of the National Education Workers Syndicate (SNTE) and the National Education Workers Coordinator (CNTE), as well as an internal current called the Indigenous Education Level and a dissident group called the Democratic State Assembly.

Primary demands were the abrogation of the pro-business education reforms, the reopening of negotiations with the federal government, implementation of agreements already signed by the government, the reinstatement of over 500 teachers who were fired as part of the education reform legislation, release of political prisoners and the payment of overdue pensions for retired teachers.

Educators in Chiapas have already struck three times this year, with the bulk of their demands still unanswered. If they get no positive response from the state and national governments, the unions say that they will strike again on May 15, the national Day of the Teacher.

### Guatemalan teachers march for increased education budget, compliance with pact

Thousands of teachers marched in Guatemala City on May 3 to demand that the government carry out the measures that it had agreed to when it signed a "Collective Pact" with the Guatemala Education Workers Syndicate (STEG). The protesting educators marched to and held demonstrations at the Ministry of Education, the Congress, the National Palace and the Presidential House.

The Collective Pact was signed in February, and was supposed to provide for increases in the education budget, improvements in education workers' wages and conditions and infrastructure. After over two months with no movement on the pact, STEG declared a partial strike on April 17. School operations in six of the nation's 22 departments have been paralyzed.

Another demand of the teachers is security from violence. Some schools have been attacked and two teachers were murdered in March.

The government says that the proposed measures are in progress and now under discussion in the Congress. The Education Minister claims that he is waiting for dictamina from the Finance Ministry and the National Civil Service Office.

### Construction workers' strike in Panama continues

The strike begun by members of Panama's Suntracs national construction workers' union on April 18 is still in effect with no end in sight. While the union has lowered its original annual salary raise demand for

2018-2021 from 15 percent to 11 percent, the Capac employers' organization has only raised its offer from 0.2 percent to 0.8 percent. Capac's proposed raise would add 4 or 5 cents to workers' hourly pay, depending on their classification.

About 95 percent of construction projects in Panama have been stopped. While Labor Minister Luis Ernesto Carles criticized Capac's "risible" raise offer, he has called the Suntracs figure "very exorbitant" and recommended that the union lower it a further two percent while Capac raise its offer to 2.5 percent, i.e. about 15 cents per hour. The president of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela, met separately with both sides last week, with no result.

If the situation remains stalled, either side can request arbitration. The union has scheduled an assembly for May 15 to evaluate the strike and decide on what to do next.

### **Argentine metal workers union cancels one-day strike, complies with arbitration order**

The Metal Workers Union (UOM) of Argentina withdrew its one-day strike call for May 3 and complied with an order from the Labor Ministry to attend "obligatory conciliation" talks. In an April 26 meeting, directors of the 230,000-member union had voted to call the strike after failing to get management reps to budge from their 12 percent raise offer, spread out over three installments, which would have brought steelworkers' monthly pay to 16,000 pesos (US\$780). The union demand is 17,000 pesos (US\$829).

The talks will have a deadline of 15 days; if there is failure to reach agreement the UOM could then call for the limited strike.

### **Illinois laborers strike, shut down construction projects**

Members of Teamsters Local 371 in Moline, Illinois have shut down construction work on the Interstate 74

bridge, the John Deere Road expansion and other projects after working under an expired contract for more than a year. Picketing laborers are saying they won't return to work until their contract with McCarthy Improvement is renewed.

According to Local 371 president Chuck Frennell, the two sides have been deadlocked on pensions and there has been no bargaining over wages or other issues.

### **B.C. hotel workers strike**

One hundred twenty workers at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey, British Columbia east of Vancouver went on strike last week when the company refused to negotiate a new contract.

A spokesman for Unifor, which is the bargaining agent for room attendants, kitchen, laundry and maintenance workers at the hotel, said that management has shown a "total lack of respect" for workers in contract talks and that the employer only wants to "pick a fight". Union negotiators say they are fighting for good working conditions and fair compensation in a new contract after the last one expired on May 1st.

### **Quebec school bus drivers set to strike**

Bus drivers employed by Autobus Outaouais in Gatineau, Quebec near Ottawa could be on strike pending the results of a membership meeting to vote on the employer's final offer.

Bus drivers in the region are organized under the Service Employees Union (SEU) whose leadership have warned the public that, depending on the vote, the 2,000 students served by the company could be without transportation.



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