

“The union abandoned us and allowed for management to blacklist us”

US, Canadian and Mexican workers denounce mass firings of Matamoros strikers

Our reporters
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Mexican auto parts and other “maquiladora” corporations are firing workers in retaliation for launching a wave of wildcat strikes that brought the Mexican border town of Matamoros to a standstill. The firings are a desperate attempt to block the growth of the strike movement, which has now spread to other cities along the border and in the country’s interior.

The president for the state of Tamaulipas’ branch of the Employer Confederation of the Mexican Republic (Coparmex), told *Expreso* on Thursday that 4,000 workers have already been fired or laid off since the strikes began.

If these firings are not reversed, the corporations will be throwing thousands of workers and their families into desperate poverty.

Matamoros workers want to notify their US and Canadian counterparts about the jobs onslaught. Speaking to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*, Juan, an Autoliv worker, said, “About 100 people were fired at the beginning, but so far that’s it.”

Another Autoliv worker said that no information is being made available of the overall scale of firings. “However, reprisals continue. For example, they want to fire you for everything now. This is aimed at those who led the strikes last month. There is more pressure on our work, and they accelerated production.”

The corporations are targeting those workers identified with leading the strikes. Rosalinda, a Kearfott worker who was fired alongside roughly 30 other militant workers, told the WSWs, “Currently, I have some mental ease. The environment at work was hostile and heavy. I feel liberated but with many questions

about the future of industry and, more than anything else, about our future.”

She said that at Kearfott, which had threatened to close its plant but continues operating, “there will be more firings tomorrow, and they will be the coworkers who were demonstrating during the strike.” She added, “We know this because their access to internet accounts and offices at the plant have already been denied. They did the same to us, and the supervisors were hostile toward us, while the union was supporting the company.

“The union abandoned us and allowed for management to blacklist us, so that we don’t find a new job.”

Blacklisting, or “boletinando,” has been reported by many fired workers in Matamoros who say the companies have made secret databases to prevent strikers from being re-hired.

At Inteva, a worker told the WSWs, “They are going to fire personnel at these companies, but that won’t make us back down... There are cards on the table, and we have to see who plays them better.”

Last week, workers at Polytech wrote on social media, “Many are being hired to fire those who struck, and the company plans to change its name to cut salaries in the future. This week many have been fired.”

On February 16 at Industrias Tricon, several workers denounced guards for entering bathrooms and demanding ID numbers in an effort to intimidate workers. One worker was written up by management for giving a bone to a dog during a break in violation of an invented policy against “throwing away food.”

“They are looking for anything to fire people and not pay the bonus of 32,000 pesos, which will be given in four parts, taking away 2,000 pesos for taxes from each deposit of 8,000 pesos,” one Industrias Tricon worker wrote.

At Parker, immediately after signing the bonus and raise, the company fired over 100 workers. Workers responded by denouncing the company: “We are being paid 60 percent or less of the severance pay without the bonus.”

About 250 autoworkers who participated in the initial wildcat strikes at Tridonex were fired at the end of January and not given the bonus the company agreed to.

The corporations are also threatening to punish the entire city by moving production and cutting 50,000 jobs.

Eduardo Solís, president of the Mexican Association of the Auto Industry (AMIA), said Monday that “with those new agreements, [companies] don’t see a continuation for their plants in the medium and long term; that is why they are already thinking about taking them to other parts of Mexico and the world.”

There were 800 layoffs at Joyson Safety Systems, the largest steering wheel plant in the world, shortly after the strike began there in mid-February. The Coca-Cola bottling plant on strike also announced that it would close down the plant and lay off its 700 workers. Strikers are occupying the facilities and militantly holding trucks there and blocking Coca-Cola trucks that enter the city.

The *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* campaigned at auto plants in Michigan to demand that all fired workers in Mexico be re-hired. Many US and Canadian workers gave statements of support to workers in Matamoros facing victimization.

A young Ford worker in the Detroit area said, “It is good to hear that strikes are spreading in Mexico. They have been exploited way too long, and it is good they are fighting back. I say, keep on going and stay strong. What you are going through happened in the 1920s and 1930s. It didn’t stop them then, and it won’t now.

“All over the world workers working for these transnational companies are saying they are not going to take it anymore. You have seen strikes in Europe and the yellow vest protests in France. I support everyone who wants a better life. Workers are saying we are

making all this money for the corporations, we want some of it.”

An Oshawa worker at one of the GM plants slated for closure called for a joint strike of all auto and auto parts workers across North America. “We need to hit GM where it hurts and show them we have livelihoods to fulfill and families to feed.” The worker reported the afternoon shift at his plant was sent home early because the strikes in Mexico have led to a shortage of steering wheels.

A worker from Fiat-Chrysler in Windsor, Ontario, said, “Every day I wake up and say I wish workers all across North America were as brave as in Mexico. I am Italian. For anyone to say one thing about one race or nationality bothers me.

“I would tell the workers in Mexico, do you want a better quality of life? You have to stand up and start somewhere.” The worker was outraged by the attempt by the unions to target Mexican workers by calling for a boycott of GM vehicles built in Mexico. “What Unifor is doing is a hate crime. Are they above the law? How could they allow what happened at the rally in Windsor with the woman wearing the sombrero,” mocking Mexican workers.

“I think Unifor knew about the plant closings four years ago. The commercials [calling for a boycott of Mexican vehicles] are disgusting. Unifor isn’t going to save anything. What divides us is class. Look at the corporations. Look at the billions of dollars they are making. They are blaming the closure of the Oshawa plant on Mexico. No! The money is going to the shareholders.” The worker said the Windsor Fiat-Chrysler plant had also been down intermittently due to parts shortages.

“We were off all last week. This week they told us our production was being cut. I am sure it is due to parts. They don’t want to tell us about the Matamoros strikes because they don’t want to start a revolution here.”



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