

Chilean professors call for strike, teachers in Honduras begin nationwide walkout

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

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### **Chilean professors call for national strike over education ministry's response to petition**

Members of Chile's College of Professors are set to begin an indefinite national strike June 3. The measure was approved May 24 by an assembly vote of 44.8 percent in favor. Though it was not a majority, the indefinite strike option garnered more votes than others, including 23.8 percent for a "phased and ascending" strike and 12.8 percent opposed to a strike.

The vote was in reaction to the Ministry of Education's (Mineduc) insufficient response to a petition submitted to it by the College in April 2018. While, according to the College's head Mario Aguilar, public education is "leaking," it has been abandoned by Mineduc and treated educators with disrespect.

Among the demands of the 2018 petition are tenure for extended working hours, better pay for preschool teachers and the end of double evaluations. The change of curriculum for middle schoolers eliminating history, art and physical education also came in for denunciation.

### **Chilean mineworkers' unions reject company offer, threaten strike over pay**

Union negotiators at the Chuquicamata copper mine in northern Chile rejected the latest offer by the state-run Codelco company May 24. The company had earlier offered a \$19,700 early signing bonus and a 1.2 percent raise if the workers agreed before May 22. The

offer was rejected.

Codelco had warned that if it did not get approval of the early signing offer, it would come back with a considerably smaller bonus offer—\$14,150—and the same 1.2 percent raise. The three unions have said in a joint statement that with the offer being "similar to the early signing [offer], the strike option would be the only road to follow."

The workers for all three unions will cast a vote on management's final offer on May 28 and 29.

### **Honduran teachers declare indefinite strike over government privatization plans**

On May 23, the Honduran Educators Improvement Professional College (COLPROSUMAH) announced that it would not attend a meeting called by the Labor and Education Secretariat, and at the same time it declared an indefinite strike. COLPROSUMAH denounced recent decrees that, it claims, "seek to privatize Health and Education." The laws would likely result in massive firings and deterioration of wages, according to the College.

The government had called a meeting for May 15, but COLPROSUMAH refused to attend, citing the same reasons. The teachers held a demonstration on May 17, and COLPROSUMAH proclaimed that as the government maintains its intransigence, "actions become firmer and stronger; the government has no other option than eliminate those decrees.

Meanwhile, over 5,000 students, professors and medical workers held a rally May 23 in downtown

Tegucigalpa to demand the annulment of the National Health and Education System Restructuring and Transformation Law, one of the decrees opposed by COLPROSUMAH. Antiriot police attacked the demonstrators with tear gas and arrested at least two.

### **Bahamian insurance board workers protest working conditions**

Over 100 employees of Bahamas' National Insurance Board (NIB) walked off the job and gathered in front of the agency's headquarters in Nassau on May 21 to demand better working conditions. The protesters are members of the Union of Public Officers (UPO), which represents about 400 NIB workers.

The contract between NIB and the UPO expired in 2018, and six months of negotiations for a new agreement are at an impasse. According to UPO officers, management has refused to bargain in good faith, and workers' attempts to access benefits are being delayed or denied.

Workers complain of delays getting sick pay, maternity benefits and unemployment benefits. Management has refused to take inflation into account and says that it will give nothing more to its workers. UPO also claims that management shows favoritism in hiring practices.

UPO claims that the system is broken and there is no will to fix it. The UPO president told ewnews.com that in order to get results, the union is prepared to "do whatever is necessary, if it means shutting down NIB offices from Grand Bahama to Inagua."

### **Lake Tahoe, California nurses hold one-day strike over stalled contract talks**

Registered Nurses at Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe, California held a one-day strike May 24 to protest stalled talks that still have not discussed wages and benefits. Nurses voted 123-17 to unionize with the California Nurses Association (CNA)

in November 2017 and talks began on a new contract in March of 2018.

Barton management hired strikebreakers to replace nurses and, as is typical, signed a five-day contract which meant nurses are being locked out an additional four days after the conclusion of the one-day strike. A new round of talks is scheduled for June 4-5. The CNA originally was slated to strike back on February 15 but withdrew the strike threat.

Besides wages and benefits, nurses have also raised staffing issues. Management has responded that their hospital meets or exceeds all staffing issues under California state law requirements, which is obviously part of the problem nurses confront.

### **Quebec City's Plains of Abraham workers strike**

Tourism workers, members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, struck the Plains of Abraham historic area in Quebec City over the weekend in what the union called a "warning." The 50 workers include maintenance, tour guides, front-desk workers, electricians and arborists. They are employees of the federal government.

The union says workers are seeking pay parity with employees of Parks Canada. Many of the employees are seasonal. They have been working without a contract since 2017.

The Plains of Abraham is the site of a major battle involving British and French forces during the Seven Years War. It hosts about 4 million visitors annually.



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