

One-day general strike in Peru, Chilean teachers continue strikes and protests

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

One-day national strike in Peru against government anti-labor policies

The General Labor Center of Peru (CGTP), United Workers Confederation (CUT), Workers Central of Peru (CTP) and other union and social organizations held a one-day national strike on June 20 to protest the National Productivity and Competitiveness Policy (PNCP), legislation promoted by President Martín Vizcarra and the Confiep business confederation.

Though presented by Vizcarra and Confiep as a means to expand Peru's economy, the PNCP contains a number of provisions that, according to a CGTP statement, serve "the transnationals and the business oligarchy of the Confiep" and would negatively affect wages, job security, vacations and other labor rights. At the same time, indigenous groups in the Andean and Amazon regions called a three-day strike against legislation that facilitates mining, logging and drilling activity on native lands.

In cities across Peru, strikes, marches and blockades took place, and the government reacted with a massive deployment of more than 41,000 police and troops, with dozens of arrests. Though the heavy repressive presence kept most business activity going in central Lima, other regions experienced blockages of the Pan American Highway, shutdowns of schools and paralysis of public transportation.

In recent weeks, the government has declared strikes and protests illegal and declared, "It is valid [that striking workers] be sanctioned, suspended and even fired."

Chilean teachers continue strike and protests over working conditions, curriculum, privatization

Continuing their strike begun June 3, teachers marched and demonstrated by the thousands throughout Chile on June 20. The

protest actions included a boisterous march by some 10,000 down three main streets of the capital Santiago, where a list of 11 demands to the Ministry of Education (Mineduc) were read out.

Among the demands were improvement of working conditions, the payment of a bonus, reversal of the trend toward privatization and the annulment of a recent law that takes physical education, arts and history classes out of the compulsory high school curriculum.

Mineduc Minister Marcela Cubillos has refused to meet with representatives of the College of Professors, claiming that their motivations are "for political reasons."

Teachers have received support from students, particularly at the 4,000-student National Institute, where students have carried out their own protests, at times clashing with the notorious Carabineros, who have used water cannon, rubber bullets and tear gas against them. At the June 20 mobilization in Santiago, separate groups of hooded demonstrators confronted police with stones, drawing attacks with tear gas and water cannon.

Argentine health workers to hold one-day strike over intimidation, poor pay, benefits

On June 19, Argentina's Atilra dairy products union called for a 24-hour strike to take place on June 26. According to a statement from the union's National Executive Council, the price of dairy products has risen 100 percent; in fact, in April and May, four dairy products were among the "top 10" in price hikes.

Yet wages remain at 2018 levels in a nation where inflation relentlessly eats away at purchasing power. Moreover, health benefits have not kept pace with inflation, "putting in danger the continuity and quality of medical care."

The statement further says that the one-day walkout "will be the beginning of a plan of struggle that will continue with new force measures" to be determined at a later date.

Limited strike action by air traffic controllers in Argentina over harassment, firings

The Aeronautic Protection and Security Technicians and Employees Association (ATEPSA) of Argentina called a series of short strikes beginning June 20 to continue to the end of the month. The stoppages—from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from either 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. or 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. depending on the day—were only for takeoffs and not for landings. Emergency, search and rescue, organ transport and humanitarian services flights have been excepted.

The source of the action goes back to the December 2018 firing of a female air traffic controller who complained of harassment by a superior. Later, she was blackballed by the Aerial Navigation Enterprise of Argentina (EANA). Meetings between ATEPSA and EANA failed to reach a favorable resolution. ATEPSA began a national campaign to repudiate the firing and blacklisting.

According to ATEPSA, that was not a unique case. The union stated that “in the face of the lack of responses to the great quantity of complaints made about the degraded conditions” including “discrimination, the worrying state of aerial navigation and the increase in workloads,” it took the decision.

Since the strikes have been of a limited character, and since the airlines, notified beforehand, were able to devise contingency plans, the impact of the strikes was severely blunted, resulting in flight delays of one or two hours. In a few cases, flights were moved ahead of schedule. No cancellations were reported as of June 22.

Non-union Denver airport workers hold one-day strike over working conditions, wages and benefits

About 75 baggage handlers and other workers at the Denver International Airport who work for Prospect Airport Services held a one-day strike June 18 to protest low pay, no benefits, insufficient staffing and poor working conditions. The non-union workers previously petitioned management and filed complaints with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration but got no response.

Workers describe an overcrowded, unclean break room infested with cockroaches, no safety equipment to assist in handling oversized luggage and situations where a single passenger service assistant (PSA) is forced to handle more than one wheelchair-bound passenger. Workers are without benefits, including health care coverage and sick days.

The Denver City Council, like cities across the country, passed an ordinance for a graduated wage of \$15 an hour in order to hopefully mollify low-paid workers. Medina Adem, a PSA, told Westward, “Fifteen dollars [an hour] doesn’t mean you have security in your job. It doesn’t mean you can have time to spend with your family, that you don’t have to work two jobs.”

Danville, Illinois, Viscofan workers strike over contract

Some 240 workers walked off the job June 21 at the Viscofan plant in Danville, Illinois, after five months of negotiations failed to produce an acceptable agreement. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 686, which represents the striking workers, indicated that the company has refused to provide any wage increase in the first year of the new agreement. Workers also object to mandatory overtime and random drug testing.

Viscofan is a global company based in Spain that dominates the technology used in the production of casings for meat products like sausage. It has production facilities in Spain, Germany, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Serbia, China, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and the United States, and markets to over 100 countries. Viscofan purchased the Danville plant in 2006.

British Columbia teachers still without contract

The chances of an agreement between the union representing BC teachers and the British Columbia Public Schools Employers Association appear slim before the contract for 43,000 educators in the province expires at the end of June. This means that mediated talks will likely take place sometime starting in July.

The average wages for BC teacher are among the lowest in Canada. Excessive workloads are also a major issue. The British Columbia Teachers Union says that low salaries are contributing to a teacher shortage and result in teachers being hired who lack qualifications. Rules regarding class sizes are not uniform throughout the province, with Vancouver and Surrey having stricter requirements.

The BCTU has ruled out strike action and insists that fall classes will go ahead as scheduled. In 2016, the Canada Supreme Court ruled that teachers had the right to negotiate class sizes, something the previous Liberal government had stripped away.



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