

GM refuses to rehire victimized Mexican workers who supported US strike

Andrea Lobo
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The WSWS Autoworker Newsletter urges all workers to attend a call-in meeting Thursday, October 31 at 7pm Eastern Time to discuss the lessons of the GM strike. To register, go to: wsws.org/autocall

Production at General Motors plants in Mexico resumed Monday after several plants were shut down by the 40-day strike of 48,000 GM workers in the United States, which was shut down by the United Auto Workers union last Friday.

The GM Complex at Silao, Mexico, has been fully shut down since October 1. The transmission and engine areas at the Ramos Arizpe Complex were closed on October 7, followed by the assembly area for the Chevrolet Blazer on October 18. GM's other two plants in Mexico, San Luis Potosí and Toluca, remained open during the US strike.

The economic impact in Mexico highlights the international character of the production process and the working class. In September, *El Financiero* reports, "manufacturing auto exports fell 2.8 percent, which was related to the effects of the General Motors strike in the US." This contributed to Mexico's worst monthly fall in exports in almost four years.

As workers in Mexico and Canada return to work, however, GM is continuing its vendetta against nine courageous workers at the Silao plant who were fired for resisting the company's demands to increase production and undermine the impact of the US strike.

The nine Silao workers were fired between August 28 and October 1. Two were singled out as GM sought to weed out rank-and-file leaders ahead of a potential strike in the US. Then, on September 15, the workers' independent group, called Generating Movement, voted to actively oppose GM's demands for forced overtime and speedup to increase output of its most profitable vehicles, the Silverado and Sierra pickup trucks. After Silao workers communicated this decision during the September 19 international online call organized by the

WSWS and appealed to US strikers for a joint struggle, GM summarily fired seven of those helping the US strike. Several others in the group had been fired earlier this year due to injuries.

On Friday, GM announced, "During the last week of October, all General Motors manufacturing complexes in Mexico will operate normally and the entirety of employees will recover their work shifts." This lie was echoed by corporate news outlets, including EFE, which had previously reported the harassment and firing of workers at Silao "as a consequence of backing US strikers." In its latest report, the news agency stressed, "while some employees only received part of their salary and others lost vacation days, General Motors assured through its Communication and Public Relations area that there were no firings."

The company, however, has not reinstated any of the victimized workers at Silao. Moreover, workers in the plant have reported to the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that, while "working at 100 percent," the factory is far from operating "normally," given increased harassment by management.

Israel Cervantes, one of the fired workers, added: "In order to increase production after the strike, the company is not allowing workers to go to the bathroom or to take their vacation time. One worker on medical leave told me he fears he will be fired given these pressures. Harassment and overtime have escalated. One injured worker told me that beyond 6 pm [end of her shift], they kept her inside until 8 pm."

He noted that those workers in the militant group that were fired were blacklisted. "No one wants to hire me. I've looked and they say no. I've had to sell the few possessions I have and take out loans."

Israel said that many of the victimized workers were discouraged by the end of the strike because they had looked to striking US workers to get their jobs back.

Some workers, he said, “think the US workers won signing bonuses while we won more work and getting treated like slaves.”

Through the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, the Mexican workers learned that there was widespread support among striking GM workers for their reinstatement. On the picket lines, workers denounced the firings and demanded their rehiring. As one GM worker at the Detroit-Hamtramck plant said, “To all my brothers and sisters in Mexico, we’re all fighting for the same thing. Us American workers are fighting for you to get your jobs back and we’re in solidarity with you.”

The UAW, however, was adamantly opposed to raising the demand for the reinstatement of the Silao workers. On the contrary, it removed references to the Silao workers from UAW Facebook pages in Ft. Wayne and other locations and did everything to frame the strike in nationalist terms, demanding the closure of Mexican plants and the shifting of production to the US.

In opposition to the chauvinism of the US and Mexican unions, Israel Cervantes appealed to US workers at Fiat Chrysler and Ford, whose contracts are being renewed next, to demand the reinstallation of all victimized autoworkers and the end of blacklisting in Mexico. “We should have a social media page for workers here to contact workers in the US and worldwide because this is not a struggle in one country or continent. It’s a struggle that we must wage globally.”

In addition to the Silao workers, GM is also victimizing US workers for posting critical statements on Facebook and other social media platforms. Over the weekend and on Monday, at least three workers at the Flint Truck Assembly Plant, including 19-year veteran Juan Gonzales, were fired as a result of their social media posts. The UAW is doing nothing to seriously oppose the victimizations and in fact welcomes them as a means of suppressing opposition to the pro-company contract it just imposed on behalf of GM.

The deal ratified the closing of the Lordstown, Ohio assembly plants, two transmission factories and one parts distribution center in the US, opens the door for a massive expansion of low-paid temporary labor at plants like Flint assembly, where nearly a third of the workers building Silverados and Sierras are temps. US workers have also expressed doubts on the legitimacy of the vote conducted by the UAW, with one arguing “in my past 24 years whenever membership votes no it still passes!”

When it comes to representing workers’ interests, the UAW is no different than the Confederation of Mexican

Workers (CTM). The CTM has not even acknowledged the firings at Silao, while it openly supported the cut in pay and vacations during the shutdown.

The workers at Silao have continued fighting to organize outside of the CTM and develop the links with workers internationally. After the UAW sellout, Mauricio Negrete Pérez, who was fired after 21 years at the Silao Complex for opposing overtime during the strike, told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter*, “Everywhere in the world, there are unions that only seek their own good even though those of us busting our asses are the workers, those making the employers millionaires are the workers. In this moment, we declare an international war against all sold-out unions.”

The GM strike and the courageous stance of Silao workers are part of the growing counteroffensive of the international working class and the objective striving of workers to unify their struggles on a world scale. From the wildcat strikes of sweatshop workers in Matamoros, Mexico and the yellow-vest protests in France, to the mass protests in Puerto Rico, Hong Kong, Chile and Lebanon, the working class is revolting against the crushing levels of social inequality produced by the world capitalist system.

In opposition to the corporate-controlled trade unions, workers need new organizations, rank-and-file factory and workplace committees, which are independent of all nationalist and pro-capitalist trade unions, political parties, including the Morena government, and their pseudo-left apologists. The committees, drawing in the widest sections of the working class and youth, must reject the profit demands of the global corporations and capitalist governments and advance the demands that workers and their families need.

That is why the reemergence of mass working-class struggles must be guided by a new international socialist perspective and strategy. This means ending capitalist exploitation in every country, establishing the collective and democratic ownership of the giant industries and banks by the international working class and reorganizing the global economy to meet human need, not private profit.



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