

Two-day national postal workers strike in Mexico

Workers Struggles: the Americas

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

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On December 23 and 24, postal workers across Mexico, employed by the Mexican Postal Service, went on a two-day national protest strike over wages and working conditions.

Strikers pointed out that wage increases promised in January 2019 have yet to materialize, that they are owed holiday bonuses and that they are forced to work in deteriorating and unsanitary offices and buildings, and lack proper vehicles, fuel and other tools for their work.

The Mexican Postal Service Workers' Union said it will publish an open letter detailing the salary agreements it says were reached last year and that haven't been fulfilled.

Teatro Colón musicians protest in Argentina

Members of the Teatro Colón Chorus and Orchestra held a public concert to protest low wages and terrible working conditions. At issue are wages, including insurance for their instruments, bad working conditions and a deterioration in the quality and scope of Teatro Colón's programming.

Fredy Varela Montero, a member of the orchestra and one of the organizers of the protest, declared before the public concert that, "We have spent nearly one month trying to communicate with management over our different problems: we have a ballet that is being

mistreated and made to work at-will, wages for musicians and artists are subject to delays, despite the historic revenues received by this theater. Given this authoritarian conduct, we have no choice but to take to the streets."

Varela also pointed out that while the artists face an attack on their wages, management is paid wages that are competitive with world-class opera houses. Teatro Colón is considered one of the top 10 opera houses in the world.

Nine days earlier, on December 18, dancers ended a presentation of Swan Lake by holding signs demanding an end to temporary part time work and better working conditions. In response, the audience gave the artists a standing ovation.

Nicaraguan demonstrators demand freedom for political prisoners

Scores of family members of political prisoners and their supporters rallied at the Galería Santo Domingo shopping center on December 24 demanding freedom for political opponents imprisoned by the regime of Daniel Ortega. The demonstrators braved the threat of repression by the Managua police and paramilitary squads who manned roadblocks at key intersections in anticipation of Christmas eve protests. The demonstrators carried photographs of political prisoners.

A second protest, at the Modelo prison, failed to take place, after authorities forced 15 prisoners, backed by riot police, to form a human shield to prevent the demonstrators from approaching. This is the second Christmas behind bars for some of the political prisoners, some of whom are still awaiting trial.

Teachers in Paraguay march in defense of public education

On December 27, teachers belonging to the National Union of Paraguayan Education Workers (OTEP-SN) rallied at the Education and Science Ministry headquarters in Asunción, Paraguay, demanding the termination of minister Eduardo Petta. At the rally teachers denounced Petta for failing to hire teachers. They also demanded increases in the education budget and the right to participate in carrying out much needed educational reforms.

Friday's rally was a repeat of mobilizations earlier in the year. In mobilizations in October and in a two-day strike in November teachers and parents protested the fact that the education budget is a mere 3 percent of government spending, resulting in low wages for teachers, a scarcity of school meals for poor students and collapsing schools.

Two workers die in Pasadena, California chemical incident

Two workers involved in the cleaning of chemical tanks were apparently overcome by fumes and died Sunday in Pasadena, California. The company, Quala, cleans chemical tanks hauled by trucks and trains.

According to reports, one of the workers went into an 18-wheel tractor-trailer to begin cleaning and was overcome by fumes. Another worker who went in to check on him also died. A third worker who went in wearing a protective mask found their bodies.

Quala management did not respond to press inquiries. The US Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued \$26,850 in fines against the company this year.

Workers strike California landfill over wages, healthcare and safety

Workers at the Otay Landfill in Chula Vista, California walked off the job December 26 causing a backup for trash hauling services in San Diego and South Bay. Over

30 members of Teamsters Local 542 voted to unionize two years ago, but are still without a contract and their demands for higher wages and improved healthcare and safety remain unfulfilled.

Since then, negotiations between the union and management have broken down. "The company has no respect for all of us out here," a picket told ABC 10News. Another said, "We pay high medical for our families ... it's unaffordable."

Workers have blocked off entrances and exits to the landfill that are causing delays in and out of the site. The city of San Diego is seeking to divert refuse haulers to other locations in an attempt to break the effectiveness of the strike.

Montreal airport refueling workers give strike notice

The International Association of Machinists gave a 72-hour strike notice to Swissport, Canada Saturday after workers rejected an employed contract proposal by a 90 percent margin. Swissport is the lone supplier of fuel to aircraft at Montreal's Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau and Mirabel airports.

A strike could begin as early as New Years Day and could seriously impact air traffic. About 100 workers are covered by the agreement, including refueling personnel, machinists, mechanics dispatchers and maintenance staff. Their previous contract expired in August. According to press reports, wages and "work-life balance" are among the main outstanding issues.

In the event of a strike it is being suggested that Swissport will use management personnel to continue operations.



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