

One-day strike called by Buenos Aires doctors, Chilean health care workers stage protests

Workers Struggles: The Americas

16 November 2020

Latin America

Buenos Aires doctors call one-day strike over salary offer

Municipal doctors in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, resolved to hold a 24-hour strike on November 17 against an “insufficient” salary offer made by the current administration of Horacio Rodríguez Larreta. The doctors are represented by the SUTECBA union, but they have rejected the union’s acceptance of an 18 percent raise, far below the inflation rate, for the remainder of the year.

A faction in the union called the “Celestial Grouping” opposes the current leadership and considers the raise to be a “disappointment” agreed to behind the doctors’ backs. “They have closed an imaginary parity talk to justify the handover of our labor rights; today the union representation is decimated by its action because they are very far from the reality of the workers, but it looks very close to Larreta,” declared a Celestial Grouping statement.

The communiqué added that the city “neglects the municipal workers” through the use of temporary contract labor and claimed that the dissidents would try to supplant the current leadership “if it’s necessary in defense of labor rights” and concluded that “courage is needed in the stage that is coming.”

Chilean health workers strike to pressure government to carry out health measures

Members of 15 Chilean health care workers unions struck and marched November 12 and 13 to demand that the government deliver on commitments it had promised. In the capital Santiago, protesters marched to La Moneda, the governmental building, to demand “a worthy and decent health system for the country,” in the words of one speaker.

Health care unions have held over 40 meetings with authorities since the March outbreak of the pandemic “without any solution to their demands for recognition or improvement of labor conditions,” according to a radio.chile.cl report. The unions resolved to meet on November 14 to “evaluate the actions to follow and we do not discount extending the strike and coming to the ultimate consequences if it is necessary, because [the government] has told us bald-faced lies and we’re not going to accept that,” claimed Karen Palma, an official in the CUT labor federation.

The 48-hour strike and mobilization call followed a failed meeting with the budget minister and, according to the CUT and others, had a high adhesion. Over 3,000 workers gathered at the Plaza de la Dignidad to

march to La Moneda. Among the demands voiced were a COVID bonus, improvement in the public sector budget and inclusion of technicians in the Sanitary Code, legislation that covers health care and medical workers.

Mexican Interjet airline workers set to strike to demand overdue pay and benefits

Workers for Mexican airline Interjet could walk off the job on November 19 if they do not get wages and benefits owed them, the Workers Confederation of Mexico (CTM) announced last Friday. Since September Interjet has dragged its feet on paying wages for its 5,000 workers.

The decision to carry out the strike followed a meeting with the Conciliation and Arbitration Board at which the CTM could not get a commitment from Interjet to pay the wages.

Interjet is in negotiations with the Tax Administration Service, to whom the airline owes taxes from 2013 to 2017 totaling over 2.9 billion pesos (US\$142 million) in addition to another 2.6 billion pesos (US\$127 million) owed to the federal Airports and Auxiliary Services agency.

The company delivered one of the four quincenas or biweekly payments on November 11, but the workers are demanding that all the payments be made. Workers note that another payday is coming up soon, leaving them still four payment behind. In addition to wages, Interjet has not contributed to food vouchers, social assistance and other benefits.

Workers at local San Luis Potosí, Mexico TV station strike for unpaid wages

The Radio and Television Workers and Artists Industrial Syndicate (Sitatyr) local in San Luis Potosí, Mexico called a strike November 12 to demand payment of unpaid wages from the broadcaster Canal 13. For the first time in 45 years, the station stopped transmitting due to the walkout.

Diego Hernández Anda, a reporter and announcer for a local radio station and leader of the union local, told reporters that the union had requested a judgment from the state’s labor court to get the wages and benefits that the station has not delivered. Sitatyr has called on Canal 13 director general José Morales Reyes to set up meetings to resolve the issue.

Trinidad and Tobago: Former pipeline workers protest for promised fringe benefits

Former workers for Trinweld Contracting Services in San Fernando, Trinidad's Marabella neighborhood held a protest November 12 to demand fringe benefits for work completed last year.

They assembled in front of the company's entrance and carried signs demanding monies owed them. One worker complained to *Newsday*, "When we enquire about our money, they keep saying, 'Next month' and giving us the runaround."

About 50 workers hired at Trinweld in 2018 for a pipeline project contracted by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. are affected. They were hired for work involving welding, fabrication, rigging, fitting and excavation. The workers were told that they would earn extra hourly pay for every day without accidents or delays. Each worker is owed between 10,000 and 20,000 Trinidadian dollars (US\$1,500–3,000). The project ended last year with the company promising to pay the money within two weeks.

The protest was small, but picketers noted that many workers were afraid of reprisals if they were seen picketing.

Paraguayan civil registry workers to strike to protest budget cut

The three unions representing Civil Registry workers in Paraguay announced November 12 that they plan to hold a one-day general strike on November 25 over a planned 15 percent cut to the civil Registry budget. Apart from the registry of birth and death certificates, most other services will be suspended.

A union spokesperson told reporters, "With relation to the budget, we are not asking for a raise; we only ask that they don't take away from us what we gained last year," about 5.7 billion guaranis (US\$809,00).

The unions have a meeting scheduled with the new director of the Civil Registry on November 19.

United States

Pennsylvania Johnson Control workers continue strike over wages and vacation

Some 44 workers at the Johnson Controls test facility near Shrewsbury, Pennsylvania, continue their strike, which began in late September when they walked out over wages and a company demand to restrict the flexibility of the vacation policy. According to United Auto Workers Local 1872, which represents the workforce, the gap on wages has narrowed, but the company is seeking to reduce the number of employees who take vacation at the same time.

Back in May, about 160 members of the Sheet Metal Workers walked out of the Johnson Controls plant in St. Joseph, Missouri, over excessive overtime. In June, some 130 workers at the company's plant in Albany, Missouri walked out over safety concerns pertaining to COVID-19. The company's Tarboro, North Carolina, plant had to be shut down due to the coronavirus.

Anthony Fletchall, who serves on the union's bargaining unit at the Albany plant told EHS Today, "If you have a fever or headaches and you

leave work or don't come in, you have to test positive for COVID-19 or will be assessed points."

Johnson Controls merged with Tyco International, headquartered in Cork, Ireland, in order to avoid taxes on its foreign operations. It is a Fortune Global 500 company employing 105,000 workers on six continents.

Coronavirus spread among Minnesota health care workers causing shortages at hospitals

The Minnesota Hospital Association revealed November 13 that the state's hospitals were short 6,130 staff due to workers who were quarantined or sick with the COVID-19 virus. The staffing crisis comes as the state's coronavirus cases requiring hospitalization rose to 1,424 with 292 in ICU beds.

A Critical Care Coordination Center set up by the state has been transferring patients from regions lacking proper facilities to deal with the virus to areas such as the Twin Cities. The organization is now finding that due to sickness among health care workers it is compelled to transfer workers with required skills from one hospital to another.

At the beginning of November, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz put in a request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide 10 essential health care workers with particular skills to bolster the state's healthcare system.

Canada

Grocery conglomerate refuses worker demands for reinstatement of COVID "hero pay"

With COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths continuing to spike across the country, grocery store workers, who will once again be required to work through the lockdowns that may soon occur, have renewed their call for a \$2 per hour virus pay premium. At the height of the first wave of the pandemic, major grocery stores moved to stem the flow of absenteeism by briefly instituting an emergency wage increase in late March. The premium, however, was withdrawn in June.

With workers demanding the reinstatement of the premium, Loblaw Corporation, Canada's largest food retailer employing 200,000 workers across the country, issued a statement affirming that no such payment will be made. The statement came at a management meeting to announce a continuing rise in corporate profits and an increase in dividend payments to stockholders.

Loblaw revenue totaled \$15.67 billion in the third quarter, up from nearly \$14.66 billion in the same quarter a year earlier. The company is on track to post a half-billion-dollar profit by the end of the year. But not a penny will be earmarked for the low-wage employees that make up the vast majority of the conglomerate's workforce. At the same time as Loblaw was announcing its rejection of any COVID premium pay, 1,400 grocery clerks across the province of Newfoundland were forced to end their 12-week strike against Loblaw's provincial Dominion stores and accept another poverty wage contract.



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