

Police kill protesting farmworkers, attack anti-police violence protest in Santiago

Workers Struggles: The Americas

4 January 2021

Latin America

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

Farmworkers in Northern Peru killed while protesting regressive agrarian labor legislation

Farmworkers blocking the Pan-American Highway in Northern Peru to protest new pro-management legislation were savagely attacked by military police on December 30. Two workers were killed. The new law grants none of the demands of farm workers, such as a wage increase to 70 soles per day (US\$20), guaranteed employment and the right to form trade unions. The victims are Reynaldo Reyes, a 27-year-old worker, and Kanuner Niller, a 16-year-old youth. Dozens were injured.

Police attack anti-police violence protest in Santiago, Chile

On December 28, Santiago police brutally repressed demonstrators that were commemorating the one-year anniversary of the protests that resulted in the death of Mauricio Fredes, a 33-year-old demonstrator who drowned in 2019 while fleeing the police.

The military police attacked the peaceful protest using tear gas and water cannons to disperse the protesters' march toward the cross street where Fredes

died.

There have been protests every week in Santiago since Fredes was killed.

Migrant workers occupy bridge between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas

More than 300 migrant workers occupied the Santa Fe bridge between the border cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juarez. The migrants have been waiting for seven months for their asylum petitions to be resolved. At the earliest, some of them have been given a May 2021 date for their court hearings.

The Trump administration has cancelled hearings using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext.

In addition to their demands for the resolution of their asylum petitions, the immigrants protested constant harassment by the US Customs Border Police (CBP) and the Juarez Municipal Public Security agency (DSPM). The CBP placed barbed-wire barriers to block the movement of the protesters. Riot-equipped CBP troops were also present.

Panamá construction workers demand back wages

Construction workers rallied across Panamá demanding an end to delays in the payment of their wages, caused by COVID-19 lockdowns. The workers are demanding a "lockdown without hunger."

According to union leader Saúl Méndez, “The problem is not the lockdown, that we think is necessary to stop contagion; the problem is that they send people home without a penny.”

At one of the rallies, a construction worker explained: “We are fighting to demand our rights; the government intends to lock us down without paying us. That is something that we will not allow. ... This government represses the people; the owners are counting their money while the workers are dying of hunger. COVID kills us and hunger kills us too! We are demanding to be paid for all the days we are locked down. Without a struggle there will be no victory!”

United States

Judge rules head of FAA conspired to victimize Delta whistle-blower pilot

A Labor Department judge ruled that Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) chief Steve Dickson used a psychological evaluation to victimize a Delta Air Lines pilot. Dickson used the fake psychological examination back in 2016 at Delta where he served as senior vice president of flight operations for over a decade to diagnose veteran co-pilot Karlene Petitt with a bipolar disorder and label her unfit to fly.

Petitt earned Delta management’s enmity for blowing the whistle on issues such as pilot fatigue, insufficient training and falsification of training records. The psychiatrist who administered the initial diagnosis would later be compelled by Illinois regulators to stop practicing medicine.

Not a single witness was called to testify in support of Delta’s allegations against Petitt. When Petitt was subsequently examined by doctors at the world-famous Mayo Clinic, the bipolar diagnosis was repudiated.

Dickson approved the victimization of Petitt. When appearing before the US Senate in 2019 for his confirmation to head the FAA, Dickson was asked about the case and testified there were “legitimate questions about her fitness to fly.”

CANADA

Toronto protests against Ontario government over COVID home care outbreaks

With 187 long-term care homes in Ontario currently suffering COVID-19 outbreaks, home care workers and family members of residents have been protesting at hard-hit facilities throughout the province. On January 2, protestors gathered at a 254-bed Tendercare facility in Greater Toronto to demand better care and protections.

In the second wave of the pandemic, already 60 residents at the home have died from the virus. Over Christmas, 77 staff members were also off sick with the infection. Another 60 residents are currently infected. Workers in the province’s home care residences continue to receive substandard pay, work grueling schedules, and struggle to receive adequate personal protective equipment. At the same time, residents of the care facilities receive dwindling service and attention.

On the same day, education workers supported by school parent organizations protested in a car caravan that circled the province’s Queens Park legislature building in downtown Toronto. Thousands of maintenance workers and administrative and support staff are required to return to work this week even though full remote learning is mandated by the government for the beginning of the new school semester.

Amidst an ongoing province-wide lockdown, the education workers have been denied access to emergency childcare funds and must present themselves for work at the schools even as their children must remain at home. The workers are also demanding adequate emergency sick pay provisions in the event that they themselves become infected, the implementation of an asymptomatic testing program throughout the school system, and remote learning equipment and resources for families lacking adequate computer and WiFi capabilities.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact