

Peruvian doctors continue nationwide walkout over health funding and working conditions

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Latin America

Peruvian doctors continue strike over budget, work conditions

Doctors in public hospitals throughout Peru have continued the indefinite strike they began on January 13 over expenditures for health care and working conditions. The doctors' main demands are for an increase in the health system's budget and provision of adequate equipment, supplies and medications for treating COVID-19 patients.

The national and regional governments, which have broken many previous promises to improve wages and conditions, have not responded to the strike. The president of the Medical Federation of Peru, Rodolfo Larota Calloquispe, told reporters that the struggle would radicalize this week with street demonstrations, occupations of buildings, and appeals to the populace. However, the medical workers will continue to treat patients infected with COVID-19.

On January 20, four doctors began a hunger strike in a tent outside the Ministries of Health and Labor in Lima, the capital. One of the doctors emphasized to reporters that the doctors consider better working conditions as more important than higher wages.

Mexican telecom workers strike for 24 hours over retirement benefit, working conditions

Workers for Mexican telecommunications giant Telmex struck nationwide on January 20 to protest a company attempt to cancel its current retirement system for new hires. The proposal would change Clause 149 in the current contract negotiated with the Telephone Workers Syndicate of the Republic of Mexico (STRM)

so that new hires would have no right to retirement benefits.

STRM also accused Telmex, which is owned by Carlos Slim, Latin America's richest man, of various contract violations and noncompliance with labor laws.

Customarily, striking workers and retirees would gather in front of company headquarters to picket, but due to the pandemic, STRM urged workers just to stay home for the one day. The union said that it is the first of a number of actions that it will call if the company refuses to withdraw its demand.

Bolivian bus drivers confederation calls 48-hour strike after talks with government break down

Representatives of the Drivers Confederation of Bolivia called a 48-hour strike for January 19 and 20 after talks with the government on January 18 over a grace period for loan payments collapsed. The drivers, who were hard hit by the pandemic, want a six-month deferral without accumulation of interest, conditions that lenders oppose.

The drivers already held a one-day walkout on January 8 before being called to negotiations with Ministry of Economy representatives. The drivers fear that under a proposal presented by the ministry, the banks could make unilateral decisions that hurt the borrowers.

The strike call was supported by nine of 11 federations, according to Confederation leader Ismael Fernández, but the Confederation of Union Workers of Bolivia refused, with its president, after a meeting with the vice minister of pensions, saying, "We will not participate in any strike; we are in conversation with the government seeking solutions for the union brothers and sisters."

Interior Vice Minister Emilio Rodas announced that he had dispatched police units to "guarantee the rights of the population" against blockades.

Chilean labor department workers strike to protest working conditions

Members of the National Labor Functionaries Association of Chile (Anfuntch) and the University Professionals Association in Santiago's Metropolitan Region struck on January 21 and 22 to demand improvements in their work conditions.

According to its website, the Anfuntch is "integrated by functionaries belonging to the auxiliary, administrative, technical, fiscal, professional and managerial level who work in the Labor Directorate [DT], whose operative units are the Labor Inspectorates." During the pandemic, some of its 350 workers have switched to telework while others are still on location.

Among the demands of the Anfuntch are that its workers be provided with the tools needed to attend to clients. One striking DT employee told *duplos.cl*, "It isn't just that we don't have the ad hoc COVID personal protection elements, but also that our functionaries are constantly subjected to high pressure to fulfill functions that arise from putting at risk their life and health."

Instead, during 2020, Chile's Budget Directorate ordered the cutting of 100 workers from the Metropolitan Region DT. The national government has already carried out or plans to carry out "modernization" and restructuring—involving more cuts—of branches in other parts of the nation. The Metropolitan Regional Council of the Anfuntch stated that the strike will continue until the authorities meet its demands.

United States

24-hour strike over wage inequities at the *New Yorker* magazine

Some 100 editorial workers at the *New Yorker* magazine and online platform carried out a 24-hour strike starting the morning of January 21 to protest management's refusal to address low wages and wage inequity. The NewsGuild of New York, which represents the striking workers, issued a statement that said in part, "We are committed to The New Yorker, which is why many of us have worked here years—even decades—despite low and stagnant wages. However much we may love our jobs, that love is not enough to live on."

The company offered an annual salary floor of \$45,000 compared to the union's call for a yearly floor of \$65,000. Workers are also protesting a clause in the contract that would allow management to unilaterally slash wages of any single worker up to 20 percent.

There are no guaranteed wage increases. Instead, management wants to introduce a "merit" system that can be manipulated at their whim.

Douglas Watson, a copy editor/web producer stated, "Like many of my fellow employees, when I came to The New Yorker I took a substantial pay cut. This sort of thing is hard on a family's budget, and the past year, which brought unanticipated childcare expenses occasioned by the pandemic, has been tough. ... I don't know if management realizes that real life is happening out here. It's time

for the company to get serious about bringing these unending contract negotiations to a close."

Canada

Successor rights dispute at Windsor Assembly Plant continues

In an ongoing dispute over the union successor rights for 60 subcontracted workers at the Stellantis auto assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario, management has agreed to continue the workers' employment until a solution is reached.

The workers, members of Unifor, had previously been subcontracted by the Auto Warehousing Company (AWC) to move finished vehicles from the plant to regional storage facilities. However, Motipark, an AWC competitor, recently won the bid for the new contract at Stellantis (formerly Fiat Chrysler). Motipark refused to take on the AWC workers organized by Unifor and moved to hire new workers at an inferior \$17 per hour pay rate. The workers employed by AWC had earned between \$20 and \$24 per hour.

Unifor has filed a complaint against Motipark with the Ontario Labour Relations Board claiming successor rights to continue to represent the 60 workers and have them hired by Motipark. Since the New Year, when Motipark took over the subcontract, Unifor officials have twice used a truck to temporarily block the shipping gate at the assembly plant to prevent the movement of finished vehicles.

However, after a second move to block the gate, Stellantis warned Unifor officials that should there be any disruption to production the company would not pay Unifor's assembly workers inside the plant. Unifor quickly withdrew their truck and both parties agreed on a "pause" to further discuss possible dispute resolutions.



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