

General strike in Haiti demands removal of president, Río de Janeiro teachers to strike against premature school re-opening

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

General strike in Haiti February 1 and 2

On Thursday, four Haitian labor groups called a general strike demanding the resignation of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse.

The Human Rights Legal Group, the Anti-corruption union brigade, the United Movement of Haitian Workers, and the National Workers Central, are among the organizations behind the strike.

Also supporting the strike are transit workers, teachers, taxi drivers, and other human rights organizations.

On Monday, January 25, thousands of students demonstrated against Moïse in Port Au Prince and in opposition to a wave of kidnappings of university students by government security agencies, which has intensified in the last few weeks under a regime that has taken on a dictatorial character. The Organization of American States and the US government support Moïse unconditionally.

The student demonstration followed two protests the week before that were brutally repressed by police.

Río de Janeiro teachers “strike for life”

Teachers in municipal and state public schools declared on Monday, February 1 their intention to strike “for life” against the premature re-opening of schools, planned for February (municipal schools) and March (State schools).

Eighty-five percent of the 707 educators at a virtual meeting approved the strike call. The teachers also demanded to be included in the groups prioritized for COVID-19 vaccines.

Argentine health workers issue open letter over plans for open pit mine

Science, health and education workers in the southern province of Chubut (Patagonia) issued an open letter to the Provincial and National governments over proposed legislation —“Sustainable development of industrial metals in Chubut Province”— which is being pushed by Peronist President Alberto Fernandez and Vice President Cristina Kirchner, and supported by the Chubut provincial government.

The Open Letter rejects this profit-oriented open-pit mining project for its potential negative environmental impact. “The expression ‘sustainable mining’ is a lie, such phrase cannot, does not apply to a practice the uses explosives to blow up millions of tons of earth; employs contaminating chemicals; requires millions of liters of drinking water; poisons the air; and causes irreversible changes in the ecosystem and in society,” declares the letter.

The letter concludes with the demand that “the people and democracy be respected.”

Bolivian doctors strike against emergency health law that bans protests

The Bolivian National Medical Council resolved to launch a national strike of indefinite duration against the Emergency Health Law, recently approved by the Bolivian House of Representatives, prohibiting health workers from protests that may interrupt health care.

“I ask the citizens: Does this legislation have anything to do with the [current] health emergency?” declared strike leader Luis Larrea.

The health workers also accuse the government of lacking “a strategy to combat the second-wave of the coronavirus.”

The strike began in La Paz on Saturday. Hospitals will be closed except for emergency rooms and COVID-19 patients.

Ford parts workers in Brazil protest layoffs

Workers at the Arteb company in the industrial city of São Bernardo went on strike last week to protest the sacking of 200 workers. Arteb manufactures headlights for Ford and other carmakers. The plant employed 870 workers and has plans to sack half the work force.

The sackings at Arteb are part of an initial wave of layoffs flowing from the announcement by Ford that it would end auto production in Brazil, a move that is expected to lead to the firing of thousands of auto part workers.

At a rally at the plant last Wednesday, workers decided to continue their walkout in solidarity with their sacked comrades.

The decision to fire the workers came on the heels of a meeting between management and the ABC metal workers union. While the striking workers are demanding the reinstatement of all the fired workers, ABC union leaders have limited their demands to a “fair compensation” for the workers.

Protests in Santiago demand freedom for Chilean political prisoners

Hundreds of Chileans rallied on Friday, January 23 in Santiago’s Dignity Square demanding freedom for the political prisoners held in jail since the mass protests of October 18, 2019. Triggered by an increase in bus fares, that protest quickly became a demonstration against social inequality and in favor of a new constitution.

Most of those still held in jail are young people, many are minors, often being held without charges against them.

Friday’s demonstration was attacked by militarized police, with water cannons.

United States

Bourbonnais, Illinois teachers hold informational picket in wake of strike vote

Some 150 teachers at elementary schools in Bourbonnais, Illinois held pickets this week and then marched to the city’s Elementary School Board District 53 offices to vent their frustrations with interminable bargaining that has been dragging on for ten months. The Bourbonnais Education Association (BEA), which is now involved in mediated talks with the district, has stated the two sides are “far apart” on issues of wages and benefits.

Teachers point out they are behind other nearby districts on wages, and they do not want to make any concessions on benefits. Teachers are also seeking to incorporate language into their contract to provide “common plan time.” This permits collaboration and planning for lessons. Currently this only occurs

once a week.

The contract expired back in August and on January 13 the 170-member bargaining unit voted by a 98 percent margin to grant strike authorization to the union. To this point, the BEA has not given a strike notice to the board but is continuing with mediated talks.

Canada

Newfoundland paramedics rally against understaffing

Dozens of paramedics from the St. John’s metro area held a lunchtime protest this past Friday to demand an end to the chronic understaffing in the ambulance service that has resulted in 2,022 “red alerts” in the past year alone. A red alert is when there are no ambulances immediately available to take incoming emergency calls. On 480 occasions calls for immediate assistance were made during a red alert period, forcing the prospective patient to wait until an ambulance became available or seek other ways to be transported.

At the demonstration, paramedics held up hand-made signs saying, “understaffed and under-appreciated” and “sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

A report from Eastern Health in the province says that the ambulance system is “dangerously understaffed” with a shortage of crews and the need for at least 3 more 24-7 ambulances for the area. It records call volumes that have increased more than three percent per year over the last five years. As dire as the situation is in St. John’s, the many rural towns across the province normally have just a single ambulance to respond to calls.

The protest by the paramedics is the latest in a series of labour disputes in the province over the past several months. Locked out workers at Hickman Chrysler Jeep distributors, members of the Teamsters, have manned a picket line for the past week. The company is demanding significant concessions in a new contract. On Thursday, a picketer was clipped by a truck in the ongoing contract dispute. Last November, a bitter 12-week strike by 1,400 Dominion grocery store workers ended with another poverty contract. In October, a three-week strike of coastal ferry captains ended whilst a strike by St. John’s bus drivers was averted at the eleventh hour.



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