

Nurses protest unsafe staffing at US health care giant HCA
Healthcare, Argentine air traffic controllers strike

Workers Struggles: The Americas

29 June 2021

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

Latin America

Colombia: July marks 2 months of popular protests over state repression

July marks two full months of protest demonstrations and rallies in Colombia in the midst of an ongoing strike wave. Rallies again took place on June 28 denouncing the scores of victims of police repression, plus hundreds of demonstrators missing at the hands of the Ivan Duque administration. According to human rights organizations 70 have been killed and 80 wounded by the anti-riot police (known as ESMAD) and civilian paramilitary squads during strikes and protests.

Buenos Aires hospital workers strike

Health care workers at the Hospital Garrahan, a renowned public pediatric hospital in Buenos Aires, Argentina, went on strike for 24 hours on June 26. The walkout was over wages and working conditions. Under conditions in which over 500 health care workers have died from the coronavirus, nurses and other health workers report exhaustion over their long hours, multiple shifts, extra duties and low wages. Nurses report that they are truly burnt out. Workers' wages in Argentina are also falling behind inflation.

Air traffic controllers strike and hold rallies across Argentina

Argentinian air traffic controllers rallied at airports in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Cordoba and other cities, beginning their strike at midnight on Saturday, June 26. The walkout is affecting domestic flights, except for humanitarian flights that transport COVID-19

patients or vaccines and medications.

The current conflict with the Argentine Air Navigation Company (EANA SE) began in May. Following the failure of a 30-day government-mandated conciliation period, last Wednesday a meeting of hundreds of air traffic controllers voted to go on strike. At issue is wages. Workers are also demanding the rehiring of a fired air traffic controller in the Patagonian city of Comodoro Rivadavia.

São Paulo transit workers rally in defense of union headquarters

On June 22 in São Paulo, Brazil, hundreds of transit workers and their supporters marched from a train station and rallied in front of their union headquarters to protest State Governor João Doria's attempt to auction the building out.

The demonstrators denounced the auction as an attempt to attack their right to organize. The auctioning of the workers' headquarters is part of a wave of privatizations by the municipal government.

Mexico City teachers occupy central square

Mexico City educators occupied the city's historic Zócalo Square for 72 hours last week (from June 22 to 25) to protest the refusal by the administration of President Lopez Obrador to seriously negotiate.

The educators are demanding an end to the right-wing "neoliberal" education law passed by the previous administration, a 100 percent wage increase and a substantial increase in pensions. United States

Nurses sound the alarm over unsafe staffing at health care giant HCA

Nurses at a number of hospitals across the United States owned by HCA Healthcare, one of the nation's largest hospital chains, have been holding pickets to call attention to unsafe staffing levels and other safety issues.

On June 21, nurses at four HCA hospitals in Florida and another in Texas picketed to protest both unsafe staffing, combined with problems of staff retention, which has undermined patient care. Marissa Lee, a nurse at Osceola Regional Medical Center in Kissimmee, Florida, told Spectrum News 13: "We just want to be safe, and we want our patients to be safe. And since they're not listening to us, that's why we're out here." Nurses face understaffing and lack gowns, gloves and masks.

At Florida's Doctors Hospital of Sarasota, registered nurses are charging management with violating its staffing guidelines by 61 percent from October to December.

One week earlier nurses at HCA hospitals in Kansas, Missouri, Nevada and North Carolina also held demonstrations organized by the National Nurses United affiliate, National Nurses Organizing Committee.

On June 15, nurses at Mission Health in Asheville, North Carolina called attention to especially dire conditions. Two national agencies downgraded Mission Hospital's ratings, citing problems in blood and surgical site infections, birth deliveries, cancer procedures and elective surgeries. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services also downgraded Mission Health's ratings.

The Asheville Watchdog reported that "HCA rewards its senior executives with bonuses and stock grants based on a formula weighted 20 percent on meeting standards for quality of patient care and 80 percent on hitting profit and share price targets. Critics, including some HCA shareholders, say the formula gives HCA executives an incentive to cut costs, often by reducing payrolls, at the expense of patient care."

78 percent of companies with remote workers are using surveillance software

Research by Express VPN found that 78 percent of the 2,000 employers taking part in a survey of companies with remote workers are using monitoring software to track employees' activities. Half of the companies adopting surveillance initiated the practice in the last six months.

The monitoring tracks the variation between workers' active and idle time by recording keystrokes, websites viewed, emails, chats and phone calls. The intrusive software also takes screenshots of remote workers' computers and can access webcams to do video surveillance.

Express VPN also surveyed remote workers and revealed 59 percent reported increased stress or anxiety due to the surveillance, and 43 percent considered the monitoring a violation of trust.

Express VPN Vice President Harold Li summed up with the conclusion: "Mutual respect and trust are vital for a productive and thriving workplace. Our research clearly shows that employers

relying on surveillance tactics are at an increased risk of creating a toxic work culture with unhappy staff, and potentially experiencing higher turnover rates."

Canada

British Columbia longshoremen suspended for work stoppage

Ninety-four dockworkers in Prince Rupert, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), were suspended without pay on June 22 for one day after they refused to cross a picket line at the seaport on British Columbia's northern coast. The disciplinary action came after the workers honoured a picket line at the terminal gate by protesters on June 14 and 15 asking that the JPO Volans, an Israeli-owned container ship, not be moored and unloaded.

The work refusal came after the restart of the Israeli bombing of the Palestinian Gaza enclave. Over the previous 10 days, the JPO Volans had been denied docking in Oakland, California by longshoremen, who also refused to work, and then at Vancouver, British Columbia due to concerted "Block the Boat" protests by pro-Palestinian demonstrators.

After a two-day delay in Prince Rupert, the ship was finally unloaded during the night when no pickets were present.

DP World, the port management company, has cited the pro-company labour contract brokered by the ILWU that is designed to handcuff workers and prevent any wildcat work stoppages. The contract reads: "The union agrees that during the term of this agreement there will be no slowdown nor strike, stoppage of work, cessation of work, or refusal to work or to continue to work."

The company initially announced longer suspensions and threatened to hold the suspended dockworkers liable for any losses incurred due to their refusal to work but withdrew the threat after fears that workers would launch further "unauthorized" job actions.



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