

Mexican farmworkers revolt over deplorable conditions in Sonora state, Buenos Aires transit workers stage protest

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

### **Mexican farmworkers revolt over deplorable conditions in Sonora state**

On Friday, November 26, more than 300 striking farm workers revolted in Sonora State and took over the “los pozitos” migrant camp in Hermosillo, Sonora’s capital city. The protest strike targeted terrible working conditions. The workers burned down the cafeteria, two buses, and some barracks in protest over the conditions that they are forced to endure.

Municipal and State police, plus the National Guard, declared a “red code” and repressed the demonstrators on the pretext that this was a fight between bands of workers that had gotten out of hand.

Iris Sanchez Chiu, leader of the General Union of Farm Workers (GUFW), refused to uphold the workers’ demands or address the conditions that caused the farmworkers’ protest. The corporatist GUFW, like the other Mexican unions, is an arm of the state and the growers to help keep farmworkers in poverty and oppressed.

### **Health workers rally in Buenos Aires**

On Wednesday, November 24, scores of health workers rallied in Buenos Aires. At issue are the disastrous working conditions they face while battling the coronavirus pandemic, poverty level wages, and the destruction of permanent jobs. In addition, health workers are demanding recognition as professionals.

Demonstrators denounced the hunger wages that many of them receive, putting them in the line of poverty. Buenos Aires

provincial government officials are accused of ignoring the six-hour work-day standard for jobs that threaten workers health.

### **Buenos Aires transit workers protest**

On November 26, Buenos Aires bus drivers carried out a 24-hour protest wildcat strike. The drivers demand wage increases, a year-end bonus and improved benefits. The drivers from privately owned city bus lines are demanding an initial monthly salary of 150,000 pesos (1,000 US dollars) for all transit workers.

### **National protest by Chilean Wal-Mart employees**

Last week, workers employed by Wal-Mart across Chile and by its subsidiary, Lider Supermarkets, protested the contingent nature of their employment and plans to load cashiers with other duties “as needed” as well as a wage revision that will lower take-home wages for many workers. The Wal-Mart union in Chile estimates that the implementation of these speed-up measures will result in the lay-off of 5,000 workers as well as cuts in pay.

Walmart estimates that these changes will result in savings of 3.6 million dollars.

### **Philadelphia hotel workers strike over wages and working conditions**

Hospitality workers walked off the job November 21 at the Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District Hotel demanding better wages and working conditions. Members of Unite Here

Local 274 charge that the Wyndham pays as much as \$3 an hour less than the \$18 an hour prevailing wage in Philadelphia's hospitality industry.

Workers also complain about the heavy workload. Housekeepers are expected to clean 14 to 16 rooms a day. Instead, they are pressing to lower that number to 10 rooms per day.

Renee Holmes told the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "When I go home, my feet are swollen, my feet hurt, my wrists hurt, to the point where I have to take a Motrin nearly every day."

According to a 2019 report by Black Work Matters, "73 percent of hotel workers earn less than \$25,000 a year." Unite Here has also called attention to the fact that Wyndham was a recipient of the \$100 billion federal bailout package that was distributed to the hotel industry.

Local 274's contract with Wyndham expired in 2019 in the lead-up to the pandemic, however, workers were forced to continue on the job. Workers ultimately rejected the company's contract offer and authorized strike action towards the end of October. Unite Here represents some 4,000 workers at hotels, airports and food services across Philadelphia metro region.

### **Workers for *New York Times* Wirecutter website go on strike to boost wages**

Staff workers for the *New York Times* product-review website Wirecutter went on strike Black Friday, November 26, and will extend it for four days until Cyber Monday. The 65 workers are pushing back on the *Times*' management's proposal to limit wage increases of one percent per year with merit increases and instead pressing for a 2.5 percent per year wage hike and a boost to minimum salaries.

The News Guild of New York, which represents the striking workers, pointed to the *New York Times*' second quarter profit of \$93 million based on \$499 million in revenue. "Our staff works around the clock during the Black Friday shopping week, our busiest and most profitable time of year, putting in extra hours over the holiday to serve our readers," said a union press release. "Our labor continues to bring in record revenue for the *Times* and helped to grow Wirecutter by 10k subscribers in the past quarter."

Workers raised \$35,000 as early as last Thursday through a GoFundMe campaign to provide a strike fund to buoy pickets.

### **Sanitation workers authorize strike in Orange County, California**

More than 400 sanitation workers for Republic Services in Orange County, California voted overwhelmingly November 24 to authorize strike action. Members of Teamsters Local 396 are protesting long hours and harassment in the recycling industry, which is rated the fifth most dangerous job in the United States.

"While Republic calls me and my colleagues 'heroes,' the company doesn't treat us that way," said mechanic Michael Dominguez. "In fact, they don't even treat us as human beings or valued employees. We cannot put up with this any longer."

In a press release, the Teamsters indicate they are bargaining on behalf of 1,000 workers in Orange County who labor in the waste management industry which, besides Republic services, includes CR&R, Waste Management, Park Disposal and WARE Disposal. Nationwide, the Teamsters represent some 7,000 Republic Services workers.

### **Scabs flown in at strikebound Sarnia toxic waste facility**

Seventy-six workers, members of Unifor, are in the second week of a strike at the Clean Harbors toxic waste landfill site in Sarnia, Ontario. Already, the company has helicoptered in scab work crews on at least four separate occasions to avoid picket lines. Workers, who have been without a contract since April, voted one hundred percent to strike after management failed to meet any of their demands.

A wage raise that meets current inflation rates and recognition of basic contract clauses are central issues in the dispute. Management has failed to honour job promotion contract provisions, by-passing seniority progression rights particularly amongst female employees.

Known as Canada's "Chemical Valley," Sarnia hosts more than 60 chemical plants and oil refineries in a 15-mile swathe around the city. Workers have pointed out that the scab-carrying helicopters stir up plumes of toxic dust as they land and take-off inside dangerous areas within the compound. The plumes then blow out onto strikers as well as onto farmland and farmhouses in the vicinity.



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