

## Dock workers stage strikes and protests in Chile, Brazil and Argentina

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

### **Dock workers stage strikes and protests in Chile, Brazil and Argentina**

Longshore workers in three South American nations staged strikes and protests over jobs and declining living standards.

In Chile, about 8,000 longshore workers carried out protest strikes in 25 terminals January 29 demanding that the government allow workers to access their private pension funds, tax free, under conditions of increasing poverty and precarious sanitary conditions, caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

On January 28, dock workers at Rio de Janeiro and other ports in Brazil carried out protests, strikes, slowdowns and demonstrations against the refusal of companies to hire full time workers. Smaller work crews, with more contingent workers, are forced to do more. These attacks are linked to the privatization of ports under the Bolsonaro administration.

Also, on January 28, longshore workers in Argentina carried out a 24-hour strike to protest the lack of progress in wage negotiation. In August 2021, the trade union that represents dock workers initiated a process of binding arbitration with the privately owned ports. There has been no progress since, under conditions of inflation exceeding 50 percent per year.

In a press release, the longshore union pointed out that while the ports are making record profits from record exports, workers are exposed to the coronavirus pandemic in the ports and unemployment is high in that South American nation.

### **Guatemala truckers and bus drivers strike**

On Monday, January 24, scores of striking truck and bus drivers blocked roads across Guatemala, demanding that the administration of President Alejandro Giammattei eliminate a recently imposed mandatory insurance measure to compensate victims of road accidents. In Guatemala, for-profit private insurance companies and banks offer traffic insurance. The mandated insurance is the “most expensive of all” according to a striker.

The drivers have declared that they do not have money to pay the new insurance, given the collapse in buying power of their wages.

The union representing the drivers has indicated that the strike will continue until the law is removed.

### **Newspaper reporters in Mexico stage nationwide protest over murders**

Hundreds of journalists and their supporters rallied last Tuesday across Mexico demanding justice over the murder of reporters. So far this year three reporters have been killed: one in the Atlantic port of Veracruz and two in Tijuana, a border town with the US (José Luis Gamboa [Jan. 10], Margarito Martinez [Jan. 17], and Lourdes Maldonado [Jan. 23]. Maldonado, a TV journalist and producer, assigned to cover Tijuana politics, had reported that she had received death threats.

At the rally in Mexico City, the demonstrators read a declaration, addressed to President Andrés López Obrador, describing the dangerous conditions that reporters face. Thirty-five thousand people had signed the statement.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, 148 journalists have been assassinated in Mexico. López Obrador in his

daily press conference promised a thorough investigation of the execution of Lourdes Maldonado.

### **Solidarity festival and rally for Argentina La Nirva workers**

Workers and members of human rights and social rights organizations rallied in the industrial suburb of Matanza, in metropolitan Buenos Aires January 29, in solidarity with the workers occupying the La Nirva food plant, who have been in struggle over unpaid wages since August 2019. In March 2020, alerted by neighbors that the plant owners were removing machines, the workers began the process of surrounding and then occupying the plant, which produces dessert pastry, while demanding that the courts prevent management from closing the plant.

Following a court decision in favor of management on December 30, 2021, the workers cooperative now running the plant broadened their appeal for mass support, while the court decision is being appealed. A protest march is being planned for February 10.

### **UPS workers protest six-dollar wage cut for part-timers**

United Parcel Service (UPS) workers picketed the company's facility in Reno, Nevada, January 28 to protest the company's plan to cut pay for part-time workers. A flyer put out by Teamsters Local 533 charged, "UPS has never given us hazard pay, and now it is planning to cut the pay of part-time workers by up to \$6 per hour."

The flyer highlighted UPS's \$8.9 billion in operating profits during the first nine months of 2021 and contrasted this with the "back-breaking workloads" imposed on workers. Workers are also complaining about a new attendance policy that provides incentives for sick workers to show up for their shifts.

Teamsters in northern California are also planning on protesting the policy.

### **Controversy over reason behind walkout at Florida sub shop goes viral**

Workers at a Jimmy John's sub shop in central Florida walked off the job last week over low pay and working conditions. When the owners posted a sign on the front door claiming the closure was due to a "labor shortage," workers put up a sign of their own next to it lambasting the ownership for working conditions. A picture of the two signs posted on Twitter and Reddit subsequently went viral.

The owner's sign read, "This location is temporarily closed due to labor shortage. We are in the process of restaffing to return to normal operations and would like to apologize for the inconvenience."

The workers sign responded: "There IS no labor shortage!!! The owners of this establishment treated their employees like dogs, never once helping us out—they don't even live in Florida. All employees (including management) were students and did a great job keeping the store running with no help from the owners. The past few months of crappy business have been the result of lazy, careless ownership."

### **Transit workers strike British Columbia's Sea to Sky Whistler route**

Eighty transit workers, members of Unifor, have struck B.C. Transit routes through Whistler, Squamish and the Pemberton Valley. The strike began this past Saturday and has shut down all public transportation in the area except for the continuation of special services for people with disabilities.

B.C. Transit, the provincial transit authority, contracts operations out to Whistler Transit LTD and Diversified Transit in Squamish and partially funds the two private companies.

Workers have been without a contract since August 2021. Their wages, pensions, benefits and job security provisions are far inferior to those in Vancouver and Victoria. In addition, about 40 percent of transit workers on the Sea to Sky route lack benefits coverage. The Whistler area, a longtime playground for the rich, has particularly high home prices, rents and other inflated, but necessary, consumer items that put further pressure on transit workers' living standards.



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