

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

Honduran transport workers strike and block highways over rising prices

Members of the South Transportation Platform truck drivers association in Honduras began a strike in the early hours of April 7, blocking various highways around the nation. The truckers took the action to protest spiraling fuel prices and crime. Demands included a rate increase, a bonus or subsidy and reduction of fuel prices.

Among the roads blockaded were one leading to the capital Tegucigalpa and another connecting it with the largest department, Olancho. The actions were taken “to initiate an open and effective dialogue with President Xiomara Castro, in order to resolve the problems that plague the transportation sector in all its forms. This includes urban and intercity transport, taxis and motorcycle taxis,” according to a report by *El Heraldito*.

Castro is the wife of former president Manuel Zelaya, who was deposed by a US-supported coup in 2009. She ran as a “leftist” candidate last year and took office in January while reassuring both US imperialists and the national bourgeoisie that she would pose no threat. She called the strike an “illegal act” that was “totally unjustified,” and declared, “There is no dialogue until they suspend their strike.”

About nine hours after the strike began, the union called off the strike and blockades. Platform president Arnulfo Sánchez said that “we will trust in the good will of President Xiomara Castro; we will suspend the seizures at the national level, and we will wait for them to summon us.”

Peruvian teachers march and protest for wage raise

Peru’s Union of Education Workers joined members of the General Workers Federation April 7 in marches and other protest actions to press their demands for a raise in the minimum wage. In the capital Lima, protesters carried banners and marched to the Congress building, where they held a rally. Similar mobilizations took place nationwide. Although there was a strong police presence at most of the protests, no violence was reported.

Panamanian police break up lab technicians protest for raise, arrest four

Lab technicians in the Clayton neighborhood of Panama City held a protest in front of the Social Security Fund (CSS) building April 8. They had been on strike for five days to demand a wage increase of US\$120. The lab techs are members of the National Association of Clinical Laboratory Technicians Assistants.

One protester told reporters that the technicians had to work up to 14 hours a day during the most critical days of the pandemic, some nonstop for months, but despite a meeting with CSS officials, their demand for a raise has been ignored. Some have been threatened by CSS authorities as well.

That afternoon, units of the National Police arrived on the scene to break up the protest. Four protesters were handcuffed and dragged off to jail while the rest were driven off by the police.

Peruvian municipal workers strike for enforcement of collective agreement

Municipal workers in Chimbote, the largest city in Peru’s Áncash region, downed their tools April 6 to demand that the city government abide by contract provisions for payment of their service time. They are also calling for a “dialogue table” to address other outstanding issues going back to 2021.

Among the strikers are some 200 public cleaning workers, who are responsible for collecting trash. The provincial government of Santa province, of which Chimbote is the capital, announced that it would resort to a contingency plan to collect the waste. The head of the public cleaning service claimed that he was attacked by striking workers and filed a criminal complaint against the workers, members of the Unified Workers Union.

Uruguayan “súpergas” workers strike for improved raise

Workers in the production of liquefied petroleum gas, known as “súpergas” in Spanish, began a strike April 7 to protest the raise proposed by the nation’s Salary Council in recent negotiations. A day later, workers in assembly voted to extend the strike until at least April 11.

At the most recent meeting with the Salary Council, the Uruguayan Federation of Commerce and Services Employees (Fuecys) proposed a wage rise of 4.8 percent, representing the amount of buying power lost last year. The Council’s counterproposal was, in the words of Fuecys president Favio Riveron, “almost worse than the guidelines of the Executive Branch.” In fact, in view of the rising inflation rates throughout Latin America, the Fuecys proposal is itself likely to be woefully inadequate.

The súpergas workers resolved to resume work on April 11, but not to perform overtime until April 25, the date of the next Salary Council

meeting.
United States

Adjunct faculty at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York authorize strike

Adjunct faculty members at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York, voted by a 92 percent margin to grant strike authorization unless the administration comes to an agreement before the end of the semester. The Service Employees International Union Local 200 United, which represents the 700 adjunct professors, has held 30 bargaining sessions over a two-and-a-half-year period and has been unable to reach an agreement over wages or job security.

Adjunct professors are paid between \$3,000 and \$3,300 per course but are seeking to raise that to \$4,700 to bring them into line with other college faculty in the region. The professors are also seeking job security over the course of a two-year contract. Currently, professors are employed semester-by-semester and can be dismissed at the administration's whim.

Adjunct professors make up over 70 percent of the faculty—only 250 of the college's faculty are full-time—giving an indication of how the administration exploits low-wage part-time faculty.

University of Southern California custodial workers protest low wages

Janitorial workers at the University of Southern California (USC), members of the Service Employees International Union, held a second protest April 8, to press Aramark, which provides custodial services to the campus, to agree to higher salaries and enhanced health care benefits. USC has only offered a paltry 30-cent wage increase for workers.

Workers have charged that wages have not kept up with inflation and many must commute long distances to their jobs due to the high cost of living near the campus.

Aramark is a Fortune 500 company, which operates in the United States and Canada and another 20 countries and is notorious for providing cheap labor to corporations, schools and prisons.

One-day strike at New York film arts company

Staff at the Anthology Film Archives in New York held a one-day strike March 31 to protest delays by the institution's board of trustees in the negotiations with United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 2110. "The wages are poverty wages, they have been for years," Josh, a striker, told *Washington Square News*.

Workers are seeking job security, living wages, a grievance procedure and severance pay. Staffers first unionized last year under the UAW. Negotiations began some two months ago.

Anthology Film Archives is known for its avant-guard film screenings. Currently, the company is focused on an expansion of their facilities and so far, has raised \$10 million for the project.

Strike vote by Indiana University graduate student workers

Graduate student workers at the University of Indiana in Bloomington are voting on strike authorization. The over 1,000 workers are seeking recognition for their union, the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition affiliated with the United Electrical Workers.

The university administration has refused to recognize the union and has threatened to fire the workers if they strike. Voting continued through Monday afternoon. A strike has been set for Wednesday if the majority vote in favor.

Workers say low pay is an issue as well as fees, which undercut some of the workers compensation. The IGWC-UE has not raised specific demands, only insisting that university officials engage in bargaining with the union.

More than 450 instructors have pledged not to retaliate against the grad workers if they walk out as have 20 departments.

Canada

Sea to Sky bus strike in British Columbia now in tenth week

Negotiations remain at a standstill in the ten-week strike of bus drivers servicing routes in the Whistler area north of Vancouver. Eighty transit workers, members of Unifor, are striking B.C. Transit routes through Whistler, Squamish and the Pemberton Valley. The strike 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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