

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

30 May 2022

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

## **Teachers, transit workers stage protest in Colon, Panama**

The Colon Unity Coalition, in Colon Province announced last Monday that protest strikes would continue. The strikers are demanding compensation and social assistance programs to address the high rates of inflation, such as freezing fuel prices, creating jobs in the province, and providing adequate social services (the strikers point out that a promised government health center has been “under construction” for over ten years, with no results in sight).

The Colon teachers issued a call for support. Currently, public school teachers are boycotting face-to-face instruction. Transit workers have paralyzed public transportation along the Province’s nine transit routes.

## **Mexican teachers strike in Zacatecas state**

State of Zacatecas striking teachers blocked streets and rallied last week in the city of Zacatecas and Mazapil. A spokesperson for the teachers declared that school administrators have refused to negotiate. The teachers went on strike two weeks ago.

“We will no longer be ignored,” declared the demonstrators, calling on parents and workers to support their struggle. The teachers are demanding an end to substandard wages and working conditions.

## **Police attack Cordoba, Argentina city workers protesting inflation**

Protesting public employees in the city of Cordoba were attacked by police on Sunday, May 29, as they approached a bicycle festival race.

The city workers are demanding higher wages to make up for and keep up with Argentina’s accelerating inflation (currently 5 percent per month). The workers took their demonstration to the “Bicycle Tour of Cordoba” event where they were immediately met with tear gas volleys from the police. One protestor was injured, two others were arrested.

## **Mass demonstration against hunger wages in Venezuela**

Several hundred workers marched in Venezuela’s capital city, Caracas, demanding an end to the policy of hunger wages imposed by the administration of President Maduro. The demonstration brought together workers, university employees, street cleaners, transit, supermarket and health workers. Also joining the protest were retirees. The demonstrators were stopped by police barricades as they approached the Miraflores Palace, Venezuela’s government house.

In addition to wage increases that reflect the rising cost of living under conditions of hyperinflation (Venezuela’s yearly inflation is 1000 percent), the workers are also demanding health benefits, sufficient implements and tools to do their jobs, and that the minimum wage meet or exceed the minimum cost of living for households.

The demonstrators denounced the Maduro administration and demanded that workers jailed in past

protests be immediately freed.

### **Washington state nurses rally to demand safe working conditions**

Some 200 nurses at the St. Michael Medical Center in Silverdale, Washington held an informational picket May 26 to rally support for their contract demands as they head for a May 31 contract expiration. In all, there are 650 nurses, members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 3000, who are involved in the current contract struggle.

Safe staffing ratios head the list of concerns for nurses who have been burned out by long hours during the pandemic. Working alongside travel nurses who are paid much high wages has not only been frustrating but has spurred nurses to request competitive wages.

Nurses are also demanding the contract incorporate language that will anticipate major health emergencies and a provision to protect them from being forced to do unsafe work. Nurses have been drafted to clean rooms, remove trash, do laundry and clean floors in between tending patients.

A single bargaining session remains this week before the contract expires. At that point, the union will consider holding a strike authorization vote.

### **Strike begins at Ontario Enbridge natural gas depots**

About one hundred workers across the province went on strike last week at the natural gas transmission, storage and operations facilities of energy giant Enbridge. Pickets went up Wednesday at the company's Dawn Hub near Chatham, Ontario—the largest gas storage and transmission plant in Canada. The strike is the first walkout at the various energy depots since 1974.

Members of Unifor, many of the workers are employed as millwrights, boilermakers, pipefitters and compressor operators. The strikers are demanding wage

increases commensurate with the surging inflation that has eroded the purchasing power of workers across the country.

Management has stated that a contingency plan has been put in place to ensure that operations continue over the course of the dispute. However, analysts warn that the strike can soon impact the safe delivery of natural gas to customers.



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