

Janitors set up picket line after being fired by Twitter in latest attack by billionaire owner Musk

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Janitors at Twitter headquarters in San Francisco, California, set up a picket line on Monday after the social media corporation terminated its agreement with the building maintenance contractor FlagShip and laying the workers off without notice.

The workers began picketing the corporate offices at noon to demand that they be rehired and compensated for any lost wages. The janitorial employees have been locked out of the Twitter offices since Friday evening.

NBC Bay Area reported on Monday that the workers, who are members of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 87, were picketing loudly outside of the Twitter headquarters.

SEIU Local president Olga Miranda said, “Our cleaning contractor at Twitter was told by Twitter that they are cutting the contract. So, we have about 48 families out of work. And it just so happens that it’s three weeks before Christmas.”

Miranda said the contract between between FlagShip and Twitter officially ends on December 9. The striking workers told local media that they intended to continue their action until their demands are met.

Bloomberg reported that San Francisco law stipulates that new agreements for security or janitorial services must include hiring the existing workers for 90 days after switching contractors. “Workers who are not hired for this time period can seek back pay and benefits for whatever portion of the transition period they were not employed,” according to Bloomberg.

The termination of the janitorial jobs is the latest in a series of attacks by Twitter on employees since the completion of the takeover of the social media company by Elon Musk in a \$44 billion private acquisition five and a half weeks ago.

Once the Twitter transaction was completed on October 27, Musk declared himself the sole director of the social media company, fired its board of directors and four top executives and laid off 3,700 employees, one half of the entire workforce.

After advertisers began pulling their spending with Twitter over concerns about content moderation, Musk issued an ultimatum to the staff stating that the company was at a “fork in the road” and any remaining employees had to commit to an “extremely hardcore” working environment. This promptly led to the resignation of another 1,200 employees.

For the workers who remain at Twitter, Musk has reportedly set up bedrooms in the corporate office including, “unmade mattresses, drab curtains and giant conference-room telepresence monitors,” as part of the “hardcore” atmosphere.

A second report late Monday by labor reporter Josh Eidelson of Bloomberg said that Twitter workers had planned to go on strike last on November 17 when, “a leader of the effort was terminated in retaliation.” Eidelson reported that a series of lawsuits have been filed by former employees, “including complaints from some workers that severance payments are less than promised and from other employees that the company retaliated against them for exercising protected labor rights.”

In one complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Twitter has been accused of “terminating an employee in retaliation for an unsuccessful effort with other workers to organize a strike.” In a second NLRB complaint, another employee “complained to the labor board of being placed on administrative leave in retaliation for

participating in a lawsuit and for suggesting to coworkers that they protest the company's return-to-office policy."

True to form, the California Labor Federation (CLF), which is made up of 1,200 unions across the state and represents more than two million workers, has done nothing to mobilize the strength of the working class in San Francisco and throughout the state to defend the Twitter janitors.

Instead, the labor bureaucrats have confined their response to sound bites such as the statement from CLF communications director Elizabeth Strater who said, "Twitter doesn't seem to understand how important it is to keep a clean house and respect the people who take out the trash." The CLF has also launched the hashtag #TakeOnTheTwit.

There is nothing on the CLF website about the struggle of the janitors at Twitter and the union has published just one perfunctory news article about the strike by 48,000 academic workers at University of California that began on November 14.

Union officials are also pushing the dangerous illusion that the issues facing the janitors can be resolved by appealing to the fascistic billionaire Elon Musk. The world's wealthiest individual, Musk is notorious for his hostility to any organized struggle by the working class including defying public health orders in California and keeping Tesla employees on the job throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Neither Twitter nor FlagShip have responded to media requests for comment on the lockout of the janitors.



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