

Argentine teacher to hold one day national protest; US East Coast airport employees strike

Workers Struggles: The Americas

26 June 2023

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

Latin America

Argentine teachers union calls for a national strike

One of the Argentine teachers' union, CETERA, called for a national protest strike to take place on June 22, in solidarity with the teachers, healthcare workers, and other sections of the working class, in protests against repression in Jujuy Province. The strike call was triggered by brutal police repression on Saturday, June 17 in the city of Jujuy against protesting workers.

The Jujuy protests against the new legislation are taking place in the context of protests and strikes by teachers and health workers, together with a mobilization of native farmers and peasants against the seizure of their land and the appropriation of lithium.

Protest demands Peru President Dina Boluarte resign over police killings

Hundreds of workers and youth rallied in San Martin Square in central Lima, Peru's capital city on Saturday, June 24 demanding the resignation of unelected president Dina Boluarte, who was designated president by the Peruvian Congress. The protest demanded justice for those killed by government police and armed forces between December 2022 and this March.

More than 67 people have been killed by the repression since the overthrow of President Pedro Castillo on December 7, 2022.

The demonstrators chanted and carried signs and flags condemning the current "congressional dictatorship" and the complicity of the government in the killings.

The protest is a prelude to a mass national mobilization to take over Lima on July 19, 2023, demanding the resignation of Boluarte, the closure of the legislature and the calling of new elections.

Uruguay construction unions demand better working conditions

On Wednesday and Thursday (June 21 and 22) striking construction workers and educators marched in Montevideo, Uruguay and rallied in Independence Square. At issue are wage improvements and other basic rights.

The construction workers carried out a national strike protesting unfair labor practices by their employers and demanding that the government set a living wage and fair labor conditions.

Joining the construction workers was the National Federation of High School Teachers, in solidarity with the construction workers and demanding greater government investments "for the people." Rank and file members of other trade unions joined in the protests.

Workers protests demands freedom for jailed Venezuelan Sidor steelworkers

On June 21 workers rallied at the Offices of the Defender of the People demanding freedom for Daniel Romero and Leonardo Azócar, steelworkers' leaders presently held incommunicado at a military prison. The protest also condemns the militarization of the Siderurgica del Orinoco (SIDOR) plant following the June 7 strike (severely repressed by the Venezuelan regime). Three strike leaders from the plant were arrested and only one was released. Azócar and Romero were transported to a military prison in Caracas.

The protesting workers report that the entire plant was placed under the control of the Bolivarian National Guard, initiating two weeks of harassment, persecution and acts of violence. This included threatening workers with firearms inside the plant and accusing workers of attempting to renew the strike or engaging in a slowdown.

United States

New Mexico hospital workers protest low wages, under-staffing

Workers at the University of New Mexico Hospital (NMH) in Albuquerque, New Mexico held a protest July 22 to demand management address their concerns over low wages and the demand for staffing ratios. District 1199 of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees has been in non-productive negotiations with management since last December.

Management told KOB News that the hospital has incurred a \$27 million loss and they “are not able to include pay increases, given our current financial situation.” The lack of staff, made worse by the pandemic, has led to a crisis.

William Wylie, a resident physician, joined the picket line to support nurses, patient care technicians and housekeepers. Speaking of the loss of nursing staff, he told the *Daily Lobo*, that the hospital “didn’t offer them any more money, they didn’t try to give them any kind of benefits, they just let them go.”

“If you’re caring for 20 patients and all of a sudden you only have two nurses or one nurse looking after all those patients, you don’t know what’s going on and so that means that it’s harder to respond to emergencies—it’s harder to get medications passed,” said Wylie.

Megan Cundy, a patient care technician, told ABC7 that she has pulled shifts where she has been the tech for 36 patients. “It’s just very dangerous and unsafe, because things can get missed. There’s just no way to do anything safely at that kind of ratio.”

Workers strike at three East Coast airports over poverty pay and abuse by management

Airport workers for Swissport Cargo went on strike June 23 at Logan International Airport in Boston, Massachusetts and Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C. over low pay and unsafe conditions. One day earlier, workers at LaGuardia Airport in New York City struck for a day over the same issues.

The one-day unfair labor practices strikes were triggered by Swissport Cargo’s refusal to provide the workers’ request for an OSHA 300 Log detailing work-related illnesses and injuries for March.

Rosa Sanchez, a cabin cleaner, told Simple Flying, that she had a five-year record devoid of warnings until last December when she raised her voice about poor working conditions. Now she is in danger of losing her job. “We won’t be intimidated this way. We need to show Swissport that they need to listen to us and fix the problems, not answer us with abuse.”

Carlos Hernandez echoed Sanchez. “[I]t’s getting harder and harder to do our jobs well when we’re working in unsafe environments and facing retaliation when we speak up about our conditions at work. That’s why we’re on strike today—to protest Swissport Cargo’s unfair retaliation.”

The unions, not wanting to trigger a general movement among heavily exploited airport workers, are instead launching a diversionary appeal to Congress to pass the “Good Jobs for Good Airports Act” through the FAA Budget Re-authorization Act.

Grocery workers in Illinois and Missouri reject contract, grant strike authorization

Grocery workers at Schnuck Market stores voted overwhelmingly June 22 to reject the most recent contract proposal and grant United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 88 strike authorization. Workers are angry that the company pays

uncompetitive wages and is freezing healthcare contributions. Workers are also demanding sick pay and holiday pay.

Schnuck operates 115 stores across Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri. Local 88 represents 1,242 workers or about 11 percent of the company’s workforce in Illinois and Missouri.

Members of UFCW Local 88 are also paid less than UFCW Local 655 Schnuck workers doing the same work, Local 88 president Dan Telle reported. “The meat, deli and seafood clerks full-time today, which is the biggest bulk of this local, you are \$3.05 an hour behind a [Local] 655 person doing the same work,” he said.

UFCW Local 88’s self-insured healthcare fund covers 11 employers and 2,000 participants. Telle reported that “Healthcare costs are increasing at an estimated rate of 7.5% per year. The company has put forth to you a zero contribution increase for the next three years, which will put the fund’s reserves dangerously low...”

Canada

Municipal workers in Westmount, Quebec strike

Blue collar workers in the city of Westmount on the island of Montreal began an indefinite strike last week in a struggle to raise their substandard wages to meet basic living requirements. The 124 workers, members of the Syndicat des cols bleus regroupés de Montréal (an FTQ local affiliated to the Canadian Union of Public Employees), have been without a contract since December 2019.

So paltry is the wage offer tabled by city management that, after calculating the inflation rise since 2019, the proposed monetary compensation would actually take the workers below the buying power of their wages when the last contract expired.

Workers have launched a number of short strikes so far this year in pursuit of an acceptable contract. Those strikes, however, were limited to first, a two-day stoppage, then a three-day walkout and then last month a one week strike. Due to the anti-worker labour regulations, management can deploy a number of workers to carry out what are deemed essential services. Regulations are designed to severely weaken worker leverage during a work stoppage. As a result, for example, garbage collection and recycling are expected to be unaffected by the strike.



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