

Southern California hotel workers assaulted on picket lines

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Are you an LA hotel worker? Fill out the form at the end of the article to get more information about forming rank-and-file committees.

On Sunday, several striking hotel workers were physically assaulted at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica outside of Los Angeles. Footage of the incident shows hotel security viciously grabbing and tackling pickets.

According to eyewitness accounts, as workers were marching from the Viceroy Santa Monica to the Fairmont Miramar Hotel, security guards from Miramar removed a barricade to allow a vehicle through. After the barricade was removed and the car gained entrance to the facility, several workers walked through the entry point and were attacked by security without warning.

According to one eyewitness, the assault by security stopped when police arrived on the scene. “Hotel security assaulted us,” Noel Rodriguez, a UNITE HERE Local 11 organizer who is seen in one of the many videos online having his arm twisted behind his back, said, “They assaulted the workers, they assaulted me and a bunch of other folks.”

Video showed police standing by as striking workers were assaulted by security guards.

According to Fox 11 News, when pressed for more details about the incident, the reporter said, “Santa Monica Police did not confirm those details [of the incident] to FOX 11 but said that the striking workers have the right to strike on hotel property and said that both sides knew that.”

This is only one of many instances of violence initiated by hotel management against striking hotel workers this past month. Other incidents include:

- An incident at the Maya Hotel in Long Beach, where hotel security and a manager tried to forcibly move strikers by using a chain link fence when a guest

ran around the fence and punched a hotel worker in the head.

- Hotel workers reported that they have been repeatedly “assaulted, threatened and had property destroyed” at the Laguna Cliffs Marriott Dana Point, with one incident involving a guest threatening to assault workers. A representative of hotel security allegedly supported the guest’s threats and told them security personnel would testify on their behalf.

- Another incident at Laguna Cliffs involved John Tesar, a “celebrity chef,” behind the Laguna Cliffs’ Knife Modern Steak Restaurant. Tesar broke a drum held by one of the striking workers and is on video unleashing a stream of profanities toward the hotel workers.

- The *Los Angeles Times* also reported, “Angry guests have filed noise complaints about early morning picket lines. There was an instance in which a passerby threw an egg and poured a cup of urine on workers.”

The *World Socialist Web Site* emphatically denounces these attacks on striking workers and calls for workers everywhere to intervene in defense of hotel workers who are under daily, constant attack.

However, neither UNITE HERE Local 11 nor the trade unions as a whole will wage any such initiative. All the hotel workers union did was file an impotent unfair labor practice charge in court against the hotel chains. Other unions—including the Writers Guild of America, SAG-AFTRA and SEIU Local 721, whose members have taken part in powerful strikes in recent days—have been silent on the attacks on the hotel workers.

At the same time, the limiting of the strike by the leadership of UNITE HERE Local 11 has left striking workers vulnerable to these attacks. Since the beginning of July, the union leaders have staggered

various “waves” of partial strikes, which have kept hotel workers isolated from workers in other industries, especially from the 72,000 writers and actors currently on strike.

The major reason for this is that the SEIU and other unions want to prevent an all-out conflict with Mayor Karen Bass and the Democratic Party, with which they are aligned. From the Biden administration to the local level, the Democrats have worked with the union bureaucracy to block or outlaw strikes by workers in strategic industries like oil, the railroads, the docks and UPS. The growing strike wave in America’s second largest city, involving entertainment, city and hotel workers threatens to escalate into a direct confrontation with the Democrats.

Rather than mobilize its entire membership in defense of decent wages, UNITE HERE Local 11, in conjunction with the Democratic Socialists of America, has issued impotent appeals to singer Taylor Swift to cancel her area tours in order to impact hotel reservations and has similarly asked the American Political Science Association and other professional organizations to cancel scheduled conferences.

This will go nowhere. What is needed is the full mobilization of the 62,000 hotel workers in Southern California and broader sections of the working class in a united fight against the rising cost of living, unsafe workloads and conditions, as well as inadequate healthcare and retirement benefits.

To fight for this, rank-and-file workers cannot be extras in the backroom maneuvers of the SEIU bureaucracy, the hotel owners and the Democratic Party. Instead, workers should form rank-and-file strike committees to establish direct lines of communication between all hotel workers, break the information blackout and demand that all negotiations be livestreamed. These committees should outline the non-negotiable demands of the workers for inflation-busting wage increases, fully paid medical and pension benefits, and rank-and-file oversight over working conditions. Workers must prepare now to defeat any sellout contract brought back by the SEIU leadership and to spread the strike.

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