

Massive march by Quebec public service workers demands wage increase; parents of “disappeared” students protest in Mexico City

## 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

Parents and family members of the 43 students disappeared in Ayotzinapa on September 26 and 27, 2014, set up tents on Thursday in front of Army headquarters in Mexico City. The protest camp will remain until the October 9 anniversary of the students’ forced “disappearance” at the hands of the Mexican armed forces.

The protesters, who have a detailed list of evidence files that are in the hands of the military, indicated they reject recent remarks by Mexican President Lopez Obrador that all information about the case has already been made public. They are demanding that the military release the rest of the information in its possession.

Lopez Obrador has promised to resolve the case before the end of his term next year.

On September 19, peasant protesters mobilized across Guatemala demanding that Attorney General Consuelo Porras, government prosecutors Rafael Curruchiche and Cinthia Monterroso, together with Judge Freddy Orellan, all resign their posts for supporting the recent coup attempt.

Members of the Peasant Development Committee (CODECA) demanded justice for the assassinations of human rights defenders and members of their own organization, denouncing the attorney general for criminal activity.

Workers and youth protested on September 16 against the reelection of President Nayib Bukely, and the arbitrary detention of hundreds as part of the government’s

repressive policies allegedly aimed at combating criminal gangs.

The protests included thousands of mothers and family members, who insisted that their innocent relatives had been jailed with no evidence and denounced Bukely’s anti-democratic and unconstitutional policies.

Protesters indicated that the rights of 5,400 individuals have been violated, resulting in the arrest of more than 1,500 innocent people.

Puerto Rican health workers protested September 19 in San Juan against their working conditions—double-shifts, low wages and unlimited patient loads (up to 15 patients per shift)—which are pushing nurses to emigrate, thus making things worse for those who remain. The protest rally took place at a recruitment event linked to a Florida hospital.

Nurse Leilani Quinones spoke to reporters at the rally about nurses having to supplement their wages by looking for outside jobs. She declared that US recruiters prefer hiring Puerto Rican nurses because “we do everything, despite the low wages they give us.”

The emigration of health workers and nurses accelerated in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, following the firing of 250 nurses at the end of a student strike in 2020.

On September 20, Medical Students at the University of Puerto Rico, in San Juan, declared a strike of unlimited duration demanding that Dean Ilka Rios be fired for corruption and abuse of authority. Rios was fired in 2022, only to be reappointed recently.

Student Julianne de La Cruz declared that, given the lack of response by UPR administrators, their only option was to strike.

Puerto Rico’s health services are mainly in private hands and lack the resources needed to respond to health emergencies and pandemics. Public health services have been starved of funds in Puerto Rico and other US possession.

circle back on this.’ They don’t ever circle back.”

## United States

Nurses at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute–Merrimack Valley in Methuen, Massachusetts, have given a 10-day strike notice and plan to carry out a one-day strike September 27 over wages and benefits. Nurses voted to strike by a 97 percent margin on August 2, more than a year after voting to join the Massachusetts Nursing Association (MNA) and multiple bargaining sessions, including recent meetings under a federal mediator.

The announcement of the strike vote did not move Dana-Farber to adjust its negotiating position and the hospital system has announced it will bring in temporary replacement nurses and lock out MNA members an additional two days. Nurses are also seeking contract language that will guarantee healthcare and vacation benefits will not be reduced during the course of the agreement.

The Methuen nurses are upset that management’s pay proposal lags 22 percent behind that of 600 nurses at Dana-Farber’s main campus in Boston. Methuen nurses in the top tier are paid \$10.55 per hour less than their Boston counterparts.

Meanwhile, Dana-Farber President and CEO Dr. Laurie Glimcher saw her pay increase by 15.4 percent during the pandemic. Her total compensation for 2021 was \$2 million. Dana-Farber made \$110 million in profits for the fiscal quarter ending March 31, 2023, following an \$87.5 million profit the previous quarter.

Social service workers for Fresno County, California, have continued their protests over critical under-staffing and poor working conditions that make it impossible to handle caseloads. Two years ago, Fresno County Department of Social Services workers blew the whistle on the fact that foster children were sleeping on concrete floors and office tables at county welfare offices after the agency failed to place them in foster homes.

Workers held an informational picket on August 30; on September 14, 120 workers picketed on their lunch hour. According to Service Employees International Union Local 521, county managers responded with a “scorning letter.”

Lorraine Ramirez, a child welfare social worker, said, “The problem is that when we offer solutions, ideas, they tell us, ‘Thanks for raising the concern,’ or ‘We will

## Canada

Tens of thousands of teachers, health professionals and social services workers marched through downtown Montreal Saturday to demand that the right-wing provincial government of Francois Legault address the workers’ demand for significant wage increases and improvements in extremely onerous working conditions. The workers, members of the four largest provincial public sector unions—the CSQ, the CSN, the APTs and the FTQ—have galvanized into a “Common Front” of 420,000.

Without a contract since March 31, workers have already begun strike votes that are scheduled to take place through mid-October. Early returns show over 90 percent approval for a campaign of intermittent, rotating strike action leading up to an all-out indefinite general strike should the government refuse to meet their demands.

The government has offered a miserly 9 percent general wage increase spread out over five years, plus a lump sum of \$1,000 the first year and various bonuses that could add an additional 2.5 percent by the end of the contract.

The workers are demanding a settlement that addresses the severe under-staffing of schools, health facilities and social services and wage increases that address the steady decline of their wages in recent years due to government austerity and rising inflation. They are looking for a comprehensive three-year contract that provides for \$100 per week or the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 2 percent for the first year, the CPI plus 3 percent in the second year and the CPI plus 4 percent in the third year. The CPI inflation measurement is currently running at about 4 percent in the province.



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