

Colombian miners call for halt to metal production for Israel; New Jersey utility workers strike

Workers Struggles: The Americas

13 November 2023

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

Mexican workers protest Gaza genocide

On Sunday November 5, thousands of Mexican workers and youth marched in Mexico City, demanding an end to the attacks to the Israeli genocide of the citizens of Gaza. This is the third protest in Mexico City against the genocide in Gaza since the bombing began.

As they marched on Paseo de la Reforma, one of the main avenues in the city, the marchers chanted “Netanyahu, fascist; you are the real terrorist,” and “this is not a war; it is genocide.”

The marchers rallied at Mexico’s National Government House. After painting the Palestinian Flag in front of the building, many of the demonstrators threw themselves on the ground to honor the Palestinian dead.

Colombian miners demand halt of mineral and fuel exports to Israel

On November 6, Colombian miners presented a letter to the Colombian government of President Gustavo Petro demanding that Colombia cancel immediately mineral and fuel exports to the ‘racist state of Israel.’ The letter, which appeared in social media compared the Israeli military with the Nazi Holocaust. The miners also demanded that Colombia break off diplomatic relations with Israel.

The letter also condemns the training that the Israeli military gave to right-wing paramilitary troops that repressed

trade unions and leftist groups in Colombia, training which the document links to the exports of Colombian minerals to Israel.

The document concluded with an appeal to all the workers of the world to stop producing metals, minerals and fuels that are being used in these wars, “because the planet is on the verge of a third world war.”

Mexico City rail transit workers strike

Mexico City rail transit workers went on strike on Monday November 6 demanding higher wages and workers’ rights. The Mexican courts had previously declared the strike illegal for “abusing the right to strike” despite the fact that the union had given a 72-hour warning, as required by anti-labor laws. The workers have been fighting for higher wages since last August.

Venezuela workers and retirees hold protests

On Thursday November 9, workers and retirees protested in Caracas and in other Venezuelan cities demanding salaries and pensions that match cost of living increases. The marchers condemned the criminalization of protests by the Maduro administration, and freedom for arrested workers.

As the march began, following a rally in Caracas’ Carabobo Square, it was blocked by the National Police.

It has been nearly two years since the last increase in the minimum wage to 130 US dollars a month. Since then, the cost of living has risen 87 percent. To keep up with the cost of living, protesters are demanding a monthly wage of 500 US dollars per month.

United States

New Jersey utility workers strike over wages and benefits

Contract talks resumed November 7 between Atlantic City Electric and the union representing nearly 400 electrical workers. The contract between the utility and members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 210 expired November 2 and workers walked off the job November 5 at numerous company sites throughout New Jersey.

Workers are seeking better pensions and improved retirement health benefits. Workers also want parity for all members in terms of benefits, putting an end to inferior benefits for workers hired in 2018. Workers want to modify language covering subcontracting to prevent it from undermining bargaining unit members. Workers have also raised a demand for language that will protect them from a future pandemic or similar situation.

Atlantic City Electric stated that its final offer contains wage increases of 16 to 20 percent over the course of a five-year agreement. But the union charges there is no 20 percent raise with 16 percent being the highest. The company has been publicly emphasizing the wages of the highest paid linemen. But the bargaining unit also contains dispatchers, load control workers and electricians. Local 210 business agent Zach Story stated, “the majority of IBEW 210 members earn substantially less than lineman.”

Story charged that executives “pay themselves inflated bonuses, handsome retirement packages and exorbitant salaries while continuing to raise customer rates and erode employee benefits and working conditions. The parent company has paid hundreds of millions of dollars in various fines throughout the country and their everyday operations are littered with unqualified management employees.”

Story was not optimistic about talks and predicted the strike could go on for weeks or months. Atlantic City Electric is bringing in contractors in an effort to break the strike.

Nurses at Mass General Brigham unit in Braintree, Massachusetts vote for one-day strike

Sixteen nurses voted on November 1 to authorize a one-

day strike at Brigham and Women’s Harbor Medical Associates South Shore Endoscopy (SSEC) facility in Braintree, Massachusetts. Nurses voted to join the Massachusetts Nurses Association in September 2022 and have been involved in fruitless negotiations for a year as they seek their first contract.

SSEC is owned by Mass General Brigham (MGB) and the wages of nurses are lower than Mass General Brigham nurse units as well as other healthcare facilities. Besides competitive pay, nurses are seeking additional personal time off and daily overtime.

MGB is the largest private employer in Massachusetts and one of the largest hospital system-based research enterprises in the US. Its CEO, Anne Klibanski raked in a salary of \$5,377,699 during 2021.

Canada

Prince Albert, Saskatchewan city workers authorize strike

Members of CUPE Local 160 working for the city of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan voted by an 80 percent margin to authorize strike on November 9. The workers include workers at the water treatment plant, wastewater treatment plant, sanitation department, parks and recreation, roadways, janitors, fleet mechanics, airport maintenance workers and others.

The CUPE Local 160 leadership made clear that the vote had only symbolic significance, pointing to the various legal procedures that have to be followed before workers are in a legal strike position, including mandatory conciliation.

The workers have been without a contract since December 2021. The city is demanding concessions such as a reduction in sick days, changes to overtime call back, and hours of work for some classifications.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact