

Anti austerity protests in Argentina, Thousand Oaks, California  
nurses vote down contract

## 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

Workers, students, retirees and the homeless staged protests across Argentina over the holidays against President Milei's austerity measures.

In Buenos Aires, homeless workers, retirees and impoverished renters laid down on the street and set up soup kitchens across from the National Legislature against Milei's housing measures that abolish rent regulation laws and give banks and landlords unlimited power over rents and mortgages, including in what currency they are payable.

Organizers of the protest pointed out that rent controls are essential for social equality. "A home is not a dream, it is a right that is conquered and defended on the streets," declared a demonstrator.

On Wednesday, scores of workers rallied in Central Buenos Aires, as part of a campaign by the trade union apparatus to pressure the Supreme Court to cancel Milei's emergency decrees on deregulation of employment and wages. The protest was triggered by the government's announcement of 7,000 layoffs in the public sector.

Last Wednesday, protesters blocked one of the national highways in Buenos Aires Province. The protests took place a day after the new government sent in new proposals to the national legislature (the "omnibus law") mandating across-the-board economic deregulations. Milei has also declared a "state of government emergency" until the end of December 2025, giving his executive branch dictatorial powers.

In Chubut Province, dockers were on strike in the Atlantic port of Rawson. The work stoppage began as a surprise strike last Thursday. The workers demand higher wages and safer and more hygienic working conditions. The strike

interrupted the export of seafood during shrimp season, and 60 shrimp boats could not be unloaded.

Port managers are refusing to negotiate over these demands, claiming that SUPA, the union that represents the strikers, had agreed in October to observe "social peace" during the shrimp harvest. Rather than give in to the workers' demands, government authorities in this Patagonian province cancelled the shrimp harvest until January 15.

In a sign of the current economic crisis, hungry workers in the region, including striking dock workers, lined up on Friday at the port hoping to get shrimp for free or at a discount.

In Greater Buenos Aires on Friday, December 29, workers and retirees staged a rally and an assembly in the working-class suburb of San Martin, protesting president Milei's dictatorial measures, banging pots and pans. The demonstrators called for workers' unity and for a general strike with their chants.

Supporters of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) arrived during the week from various parts of Mexico to San Cristobal de las Casas, in Chiapas State, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the uprising led by that group, which is taking place between December 30 and January 2nd.

The 1994 uprising revealed to Mexicans and the world how rural workers in Southern Mexico, many of them from indigenous populations, were forced to live in misery and fear of violence.

Following the announcement by Peru's Culture ministry that the sales of tourist tickets to the Inca monuments of Machu Pichu in Peru, which attract thousands of visitors each year, will be privatized, workers at the site launched a strike forcing the ministry to postpone its plan.

A spokesperson of the striking Machu Pichu employees promised to spread and 'radicalize' the strike unless the government cancels the plan.

Human and social rights groups announced last Tuesday

the beginning of mass protests.

Opponents of the privatization of ticket sales claim that this is a step toward the privatization of Machu Pichu and the monopolization of the tourist industry in Peru, harming local businesses, part of the economic structure on which many Peruvians depend.

## United States

The 800 nurses at Los Robles Regional Medical Center in Thousand Oaks, California, voted down a tentative agreement reached by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The union and management worked out the proposal under a federal mediator after nurses carried out a five-day strike over Thanksgiving.

The agreement offered nurses a 17 percent wage increase over the course of three years. But the major hurdle was staffing ratios. SEIU 121RN executive director Rosanna Mendez admitted in a written statement that the majority of nurses believe the staffing “guardrails” didn’t provide protection to patients and staff.

Nurses charge that Los Robles repeatedly violates state-mandated staffing ratios. “The hospital must do more to assure nurses that it will comply with the law, so that nurses can safely care for their patients,” wrote Mendez.

Los Robles is owned by the for-profit hospital chain HCA Healthcare and was cited in a scam last year where HCA required newly-hired nurses to sign an agreement to repay the healthcare giant for training if they quit or were fired before a two-year agreement expired. There was an additional stipulation that interest and legal fees could be tacked on.

“We’re being preyed on by someone in power. We’re desperate for a job, we just got out of school, we don’t know any better,” Los Robles nurse Jacqui Rum told NBC News last year. “I didn’t even have time to take a lunch break, my hair was falling out, the level of stress just wasn’t sustainable.”

Workers at the Hilton and Hyatt Place hotels in Pasadena California, carried out a two-day strike ending on New Year’s day and coinciding with the festivities around the annual Rose Parade and college bowl game. Some 125 members of Unite Here Local 11 are demanding an immediate \$5-an-hour wage increase, improved staffing along with better pension and healthcare benefits.

Luis Perez, a 30-year veteran, who works in shipping and receiving at the Hilton Pasadena, told the Pasadena Star-News, “I’m in the strike because the pay we receive doesn’t

reflect the enormous amount of work we do. I struggle to pay rent and bills. Everything is so expensive. There’s plenty of business at the hotel, so it’s fair for them to pay us a fair wage.”

Perez said previously he was one of two full time workers. Now he only gets help two days a week. “It’s very heavy work and I’m constantly going up and down stairs. The company saves a lot of money by not hiring another full time worker, but we’re being run ragged.”

The union says they have tentative agreements with 24 hotels across Southern California and Arizona. According to Unite Here spokesperson Maria Teresa Kamel, the “private equity groups have been harder to negotiate with than other hotels.”

Aimbridge Hospitality, which operates the Hilton Pasadena, manages 1,500 hotels globally. Ensemble, which operates the Hyatt Place Pasadena, has 14 hotels in its portfolio.

## Canada

With a strike by 70 workers at FTG Aerospace in its fourth week, management has employed scab labour to perform the work of the low-wage assemblers of aircraft cockpit panels. The workers, members of Unifor, had rejected a tentative agreement that was recommended to them by their union leadership. Unifor, the largest private sector union in the country, has faced repeated rebellions by rank-and-file workers against attempts by Unifor leaders to foist inferior contracts on them.

FTG workers, who currently earn only \$17.95 per hour in one of Canada’s most expensive cities, have been without a contract since August 2023. FTG manufactures high technology circuit boards and other electronic products and sub-systems for defense contractors and commercial aerospace enterprises across the globe. The company operates facilities in Toronto, the United States and also has a joint venture in China. In recent years, FTG has received \$13.3 million in subsidies from the Canadian federal government and \$2.6 million from the Ontario government.



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