

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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## Buenos Aires police assault protest

On Wednesday March 5, Buenos Aires police repressed a protest march and rally by Social Security recipients at the national legislature. The pensioners demanded their pensions and health benefits, following budget cuts and layoffs affecting the National Institute of Social Services.

The demonstrators were surrounded by motorcycle police, armed with tear gas and police batons, who corralled and attacked the demonstrators, many of whom suffered head wounds caused by their attackers. The police were following anti-protest rules imposed by Security Minister Patricia Bullrich.

A news reporter declared: “They gassed me, even though I am a reporter. I work with a mask on, but they [the police] took advantage when I was helping a colleague and gassed me.”

According to Buenos Aires daily *Página 12*, as the demonstrators were being assaulted, outraged football fans and other workers joined the protest, temporarily interfering with the police, who returned and resumed their attacks on the protesters later on.

## Nationwide teachers' strike in Mexico over pension changes

Teachers belonging to the National Public Employees Union and to the National Teachers Union (CNTE and SNTE) carried out a national two-day strike on March 6 and 7.

On March 7, striking educators carried out a mass

protest march and rally in Mexico City. At issue are recently approved changes in public employee pension legislation. The new law (SSSTE 2025) increased pension contributions from teachers and public employees by 2.7 percent, and lowers what teachers and other employees will receive once they retire.

In addition to demanding that the SSSTE not be changed from its 2007 version, the striking teachers are also demanding the rehiring of sacked teachers and that teachers be allowed to retire after 28 years on the job.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum insists that the changes are needed to increase retirement funds, and that they will not affect all workers.

## Over 2,000 water workers protest in Guadalajara, Mexico

On Tuesday March 4, 2,430 employees of the Intermunicipal Water and Sewer workers (SIAPA) went on a 24-hour strike and carried out protest marches and rallies in Guadalajara, Mexico's sixth-largest city. At issue was the demand for better working conditions, higher wages, and more equipment, tools and vehicles to carry out their jobs. The workers' contract expired on March 1; negotiations began on February 27.

At Guadalajara's government house, government officials locked the doors and prevented the workers from presenting their petitions.

The strikers' demands include new high-quality street working equipment and materials, vehicles in good repair (half of the 500 vehicles in use have mechanical problems), plus and wage increases that exceed inflation.

## Nurses at Long Island, New York, hospital poised for one-day strike

Over 900 nurses at the South Shore University Hospital on Long Island, New York state, are slated to carry out a one-day strike March 17 unless hospital management comes to an agreement over staffing ratios and wages. Members of the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) have been working without a contract since February 28.

When polled last year, nurses reported that the hospital failed to provide break coverage for nurses on over 6 percent of shifts. The NYSNA also charges management with “engaging in retaliation, interrogation and surveillance.”

The NYSNA is negotiating for nurses at the Northwell Huntington Hospital and Mount Sinai South Nassau Hospital on Long Island. Some 2,500 nurses are involved in current negotiations at all three hospitals.

### **Transit workers strike in Baton Rouge for “as long as it takes”**

City transit workers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, went on strike March 3 after the Capital Area Transit System (CATS) pulled out of arbitrated talks and sought to foist a contract on workers unilaterally. Members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1546 voted by a 91 percent margin to strike after CATS failed to meet their demands for an 8 percent wage increase along with improved benefits and safety measures.

The ATU charges that CATS pays four to five dollars an hour less than workers at other regional transit systems. CATS claims it does not have the funds to underwrite an improvement in the contract. It has mandated supervisory personnel to serve as strikebreakers.

The old agreement expired on December 31, 2024, but was extended until the end of January while arbitration proceeded. The strike is open-ended, or as workers have expressed, it will go on for “as long as it takes.”

### **Edmonton schools impose rotating on-line learning during strike**

With more than 3,000 Edmonton area public school

education support staff now into their ninth week on rotating strike, school officials have started to impose rotating on-line learning schedules on grade school students. Some schools are sending their grade 7 and 8 students home once or twice a week. The move is on top of education management orders beginning last January that parents of children with significant special needs should keep their children at home until the disputes are settled.

School support workers across the province are members of various locals of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). School boards have begun hiring strike-breaking substitute teachers at wages higher than the striking workforce earned.

Although schools remain open, services have been reduced particularly for students requiring special learning attendants. Altogether in the province of Alberta, more than 6,600 education assistants are now engaging in job actions. The workers’ struggle is taking varying forms from work-to-rule to rotating and all-out strike activity.

The struggle for decent wages amongst school support workers continues to spread. Those engaged in job actions range from education assistants, librarians, cafeteria workers, school nurses and administration staff. The contract fight takes place as the right-wing government of Premier Danielle Smith continues to starve the provincial education system of funding.

Union officials have said the average support worker in Alberta earns \$34,500 per year. However, the education assistants, who make up the lion’s share of the support workforce, earn on average only \$26,400. The union is being offered a paltry 3 percent wage increase that is to be spread out over four years. CUPE, however, has refused to organize, mobilize and centralize the struggle in all-out strike action across the province.



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