

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

## Teachers stage protest in Sao Paulo, Brazil over privatization; Striking British Columbia LifeLab technicians picket legislature

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### Teachers stage protest in Sao Paulo, Brazil over privatization

On Tuesday, April 15, educators marched and rallied in the city of São Paulo against the privatization and the transformation of full-time teachers into contingent employees. More than 2,000 teachers marched in São Paulo and rallied at the City Hall building.

São Paulo public school system education workers are facing harsh attacks on wages, jobs and working conditions from both São Paulo and from the Lula administration's 2023 budget-cutting "Fiscal Scaffold" (Arcabouço Fiscal).

Among these attacks, the mobilization was a rejection of hunger wages and the Lei 18,221 law, which significantly reduces wages, working conditions and benefits for "readapted teachers" (laid-off teachers forced into temporary status). The demonstrators denounced these measures as setting the stage for the privatization of public schools in São Paulo.

Both parties are far apart in terms of wage demands; educators have rejected a 6 percent wage increase over two years (in wages and food stamps); they are demanding a 44 percent wage increase.

The rally was tightly controlled by bureaucrats of the teachers trade union (Sinpeem), which restricted the use of the open mike to pre-selected teachers.

São Paulo educators are set to strike on April 25. However, the municipality is mandating that 70 percent of schools stay open, under penalty of large fines against the union.

### Argentina police again repress pensioners protesting Milei administration cuts

On Wednesday, April 16, police repressed the weekly protest rally at the National Legislature in defense of their rights and incomes under attack by the Milei administration.

The police, under orders of Minister of Security Patricia Bullrich, used tear gas and batons against the pensioners, corralling them and forcing them off the street. Members of the Buenos Aires Press Union (SipreBA) reported that several protesters were arrested, others were wounded. "The protest of retirees in front of the Legislature takes place every Wednesday, even though repression is the only answer they get to their demands. This afternoon people were arrested and wounded, and, once again, members of the press were tear-gassed. We will continue supporting, covering, and condemning," declared a press union spokesperson.

The retirees are demanding increases in their pensions, and that the cost of medications be covered 100 percent.

### Argentina customs employees strike for 48 hours

Workers employed by the National Customs Agency went on a 48-hour sit-down strike across the nation on April 15 and 16. The sit-down affected ports and other entry points in Argentina. Workers allowed the free passage of merchandise and travelers without exercising any type of government-mandated controls.

The strike issue was wages. Real wages for customs workers have fallen 50 percent.

### Monterrey, Mexico workers protesting transit fares attacked by police

On April 18, scores of workers in the industrial city of Monterrey, Mexico's second largest by population, were set on by police while holding a protest over transit fare increases.

Following a rally at city hall, the demonstrators had planned

to picnic at a nearby park. Instead, they were attacked by “Civil Force” gendarmes as they approached city hall. One demonstrator, 38-year-old Luis N., was brutally assaulted and arrested. As of this Sunday, the police had not released information about the arrested protester’s location.

The demonstrators, organized by the Transit Users Collective (CVDLU) were protesting the imposition of a 13 percent increase in one-way transit fares (from 15 to 17 pesos), to take effect gradually in monthly increases over the course of this year.

According to one of the demonstrators quoted by ABC news: “It is unacceptable that we are asked to pay more for ever-worsening [transit] services. The buses ... are way below minimal quality standards. The frequency of services is minimal and when a bus does arrive, it does not stop where it should, it is crowded with people, and dirty.”

The CVDLU is a Social Democratic NGO, dedicated to monitoring and exposing the deteriorating conditions of Monterrey transit systems. Linked to their transit fare protests, the Collective is also campaigning for the removal of the governor of the state, Samuel Garcia.

This was the latest of several protests in Monterrey that have taken place since the fare increase went into effect on January 14 of this year.

### **Indiana casino workers strike over wages and retirement benefits**

Casino workers at Caesar’s Southern Indiana Hotel & Casino in Elizabeth, Indiana, launched a strike April 14 demanding improved wages and retirement benefits. Members of Teamsters Local 89 and Operating Engineers Local 399 voted to strike by a 98 percent margin at the end of March, one month after the old agreement expired and in the wake of months of fruitless negotiations.

“All we’re asking for is the ability to support our families and retire with dignity. This property makes more than enough money to do right by us,” declared Heather Emily, a cage cashier.

The casino is owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and raked in over \$240 million in revenue during 2024, breaking previous records.

### **Negotiations resume in five-week old Cummins strike in Wisconsin**

Negotiations between Cummins Corporation and the union

representing 90 striking manufacturing workers at the company’s Oshkosh, Wisconsin plant are to resume April 22. Members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 291 walked out on strike March 18 after company management pressed workers to accept mandatory Saturday overtime as well as create a temporary workforce.

Previous contract language barred the use of temporary workers. Local 291 President Ryan Compton told NBC 26 that the proposal would “erode our membership... We’re just very much against the whole system... My opinion is they have been told by corporate this is what we want, this is what we need, and you need to get it.”

Workers already are mandated to work 18 Saturdays a year. Management is seeking to increase this. The Oshkosh plant manufactures heavy duty axles for construction and military vehicles. Cummins is a global company with 70,000 employees and facilities in 197 countries and territories. Its revenues in 2024 were \$34 billion.

### **British Columbia health care workers rally at Victoria legislature**

Hundreds of healthcare workers including nurses, home and long term care workers and striking lab technicians, all members of the BC General Employees Union (BCGEU), rallied at the BC provincial legislature last week to demand that the NDP government return lab medical services to the public sector and to support the ongoing strike by more than 1,100 lab technicians at LifeLabs, the largest patient testing service in the province.

LifeLabs performs for-profit medical lab testing which accounts for over two-thirds of all such testing in British Columbia and provides the diagnostic results for more than 7 million patients per year.

The striking medical technicians work in 129 testing laboratories across British Columbia and are now entering the eleventh week of a rotating strike to press their demands for wage equity with hospital-based lab technicians and for better health and safety protections and scheduling processes.

Technicians at LifeLabs in the province are paid between 4 and 16 per cent less than hospital workers who perform the same job. Due to provincially mandated essential services regulations, workers are required to rotate their strike activity.



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