

Nurses carry out one-day strike at Long Beach and Alhambra hospitals in Southern California

Marc Wells, Kimie Saito
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Hundreds of registered nurses joined a one-day strike at two hospitals in southern California on Thursday. Nurses at MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center and Miller Children's and Women's Hospital and at Alhambra Hospital Medical Center are fighting intolerable and dangerous working conditions.

The strike, called by the California Nurses Association/National Nurses United (CNA/NNU), is part of a broader upsurge of strike action in recent weeks, particularly among healthcare workers. In the eastern United States, hundreds of nursing home workers are on a one-week strike in Buffalo, New York and hundreds more workers are on an indefinite strike at Butler Hospital in Rhode Island. Thousands of nursing home workers are set to launch a statewide strike in Connecticut next week.

The nurses' action was a powerful expression of deep-seated anger over conditions, driven by the subordination of healthcare and all other social questions to the profit system, that jeopardize both their lives and the lives of their patients. They are routinely forced to care for unsafe numbers of patients in understaffed units, while critical resources are slashed and corners cut to maximize profits. These are conditions incompatible with safe, effective and humane medical care.

Beyond immediate workplace grievances, the strike reflected a growing political opposition. Many nurses correctly see their struggle as inseparable from the broader political and social crisis engulfing the United States.

The Trump administration's catastrophic assault on social programs and the reactionary, conspiratorial platform of figures like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have

become rallying points for opposition among healthcare workers. "He's another problem," an ER nurse told the WSWS, referring to Kennedy. "I don't think a lot of his rhetoric is based in science."

The deliberate dismantling of public health infrastructure, the rejection of science, and the promotion of anti-vaccine, anti-public health policies by the ruling elite are understood as existential threats to human society.

MemorialCare is playing hardball with workers, provocatively announcing more layoffs on May 1, also known as May Day or International Workers Day. Though the strike has been limited to 24 hours, management plans to lock nurses out for a further four days.

One of those supporting the strike Thursday was a nurse with over 30 years in the field who was recently laid off. In The Village, the hospital's children's wing, only 47 out of an already inadequate staff of 60 remain.

An ER nurse at Long Beach MemorialCare Hospital spoke about the broader impact of layoffs: "The nurses are the ones who provide a lot of the in-house education for other nurses. We have to have a renewed education every single year, so it just doesn't make sense to lay off nurses."

Regarding the Trump administration, she said, "I don't think it's a very just administration. I don't think they help any person unless they're rich. And I think they're pretty radical in the sense that they shut down any discourse or discussion surrounding issues that affect a lot of people, people who are not well-off. I don't think it's very fair."

Another ER nurse described the impact of the growing social crisis on hospitals. "Actually it can be

very dangerous in the ER. We're not just treating heart attacks and injuries. There can also be parents there with their children, who are in crisis; people on fentanyl. There are people on drugs and people with mental health crises. It seems to be getting worse. And when you don't have enough staff to handle all this, it's overwhelming."

In spite of the determined mood, the CNA/NNU bureaucracy is holding nurses back from a broader struggle. On the picket lines, CNA/NNU officials harassed WSWS reporters and told workers not to speak to them on the grounds of their socialist politics, falsely claiming them to be "anti-union."

Equating their own narrow social interests with "the union," the bureaucracy uses this slander to oppose the WSWS' call for workers to enforce democratic control of their struggles and unite in a broad movement through the formation of rank-and-file committees, which are being built all over the world. Reporters distributed copies of a recent WSWS statement calling for such committees to "be established in every hospital, connected across hospitals, cities and states, and linked up with workers in other industries. Postal workers, transit workers, teachers, logistics workers and entertainment workers—millions face the same enemy, and only unified action can turn the tide."

Meanwhile, the bureaucracy has called only a narrow "unfair labor practice strike" for a single day, despite three rounds of layoffs since 2024. The strike was isolated from other healthcare workers—despite numerous simultaneous struggles—and from the wider working class, despite the shared conditions and mounting anger that bind them.

Workers interviewed by the WSWS also criticized the union for refusing to provide strike pay, a basic element of strike preparation. The lack of strike pay is used as a deterrent to future strikes and as a mechanism to keep the movement under the union's tight control.

According to publicly available filings, executive directors and presidents in large national unions like CNA/NNU typically earn annual salaries between \$200,000 and \$350,000. In 2024, Executive Director Bonnie Castillo made a total of over \$370,000, drawn from workers' dues money, according to government records. These bureaucrats are untouched by the economic consequences of the strikes they pretend to

lead.

Far from advancing the struggle, the union leadership's primary objective was to prevent it from gaining momentum. Their task was not to unify and expand the strike, but to limit and contain it. As in countless other struggles, the union served as a brake on workers' militancy, channeling their opposition into safe, bureaucratically approved gestures that left the underlying structures of exploitation intact.

What is taking shape is a political confrontation of historic dimensions between the vast majority of society and the alliance of corporations, the state and the union bureaucracies that defend capitalist rule. The ruling class, having profited handsomely from death and disease, is now preparing for more—more privatizations, more repression, more austerity, more war. It is no accident that the healthcare industry is being gutted even as billions are funneled into imperialist military adventures.

Nurses are drawing important conclusions: the fight for safe staffing, decent wages and humane conditions cannot be waged through toothless strikes and unions that sabotage every genuine expression of resistance. The crisis demands new independent forms of struggle, rank-and-file committees democratically controlled by workers themselves and united across trades, industries and national borders.



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