

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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Latin America

Two-day strike by Chilean teachers to demand education funding

On June 4 and 5, public school teachers went on a two-day protest strike to pressure the Boric administration to partially deal with the crisis of public education.

On June 5, tens of thousands of striking public school teachers from across Chile marched on the National Legislature in Valparaiso demanding increases in the education budget, the hiring of more permanent teachers, and decent wages for education workers.

Since January of this year the Boric administration has ignored repeated demands from the teachers to deal with the crisis of contingent employment and the collapse of education in the country.

The teachers' union is asking for a new law including demands such as professional career reform, more rest hours for educators, strengthening the role of "head teacher" and creation of a "Teacher's Day."

The government's initial response was to require that schools punish the strikers through suspensions and the withholding of pay.

At the Valparaiso rally, Mario Aguilar, president of the teachers' union, (Colegio de Profesores y Profesoras) gave a self-serving, demagogic speech directed at the government and legislature, demanding that the teachers be heard.

Aguilar described school classrooms that lack heating systems, schools with collapsing bathrooms, and classrooms that leak water on students when it rains as examples of the collapse of public schools. However, he refrained from extending the strike or reaching out for support to other sections of the working class.

Health workers strike in Oaxaca, Mexico

A strike by 2,500 health workers is affecting seven hospitals and over 160 clinics in the Pacific Coast state of Oaxaca, southeast of Mexico City. At issue is the serious lack of medications, tools and equipment. The strike began on June 4 and is ongoing.

On June 4, workers rejected a proposal for band-aid measures and decided to continue their strike, despite pressure from their own trade union bureaucracy.

The strikers insist that there will be no return to work until they receive the necessary equipment and medicines. They are also demanding that substandard and worn-out medical equipment be replaced or repaired. One example is the lack of working air conditioning in many facilities and operating rooms. The absence of air conditioning imperils patients.

Nurses call for a one-day protest strike in San Juan, Puerto Rico

The death of a nurse, employed by the Bayamon Medical Center, near San Juan, has mobilized nurses across this US territory, calling for a mass mobilization and rally June 12 at the Capitol building in San Juan.

Jomayra Ferrer, a mother of two, died on June 4 from injuries sustained on May 19. Ferrer had fallen asleep while driving, from exhaustion caused by a prolonged shift. Ferrer was routinely obligated to work long shifts and replace other nurses or health workers.

Puerto Rican nurses face a serious crisis due to overwork and the scarcity of medical workers in Puerto Rico's hospitals, forcing nurses into speed-up conditions. At times, nurses are forced to attend more than 40 patients in 8 to 12-hour shifts. Nurses are also expected to remain on the job if a replacement nurse does not show up on time.

The nurses are demanding the passage of "project 1035" in the state legislature, a measure that limits the number of patients per nurse on any given shift. They are also demanding a wage increase to compensate for the increasing living costs and exorbitant rents that force nurses to drive long hours from their place of work, and an end to assigning nurses tasks that have little to do with nursing.

Mass protests in Brazil over new environmental law

On June 2, mass protests took place in 12 Brazilian States. In big cities such as São Paulo and Brasília, thousands marched against a new law that facilitates the destruction of the environment.

The legislation (Law 2150/2021) makes it easier for mining companies to obtain government approval for their projects, riding roughshod over the interests of peasants and small farmers, and undercutting reforestation and water projects.

Thousands of demonstrators, representing more than 60 organizations, also rallied at the gates of Parque da Redenção Park in Rio Grande do Sul. In 2024, Rio Grande do Sul was hit by severe floods due to heavy rains. The floods and three other environmental disasters in Brazil in 2023 and 2024 were the direct result of environmental degradation.

The Rio Grande demonstrators carried signs denouncing the new law with slogans such as "the environment is not for sale," and "the floods will return."

Health workers strike Montevideo, Uruguay teaching hospital

On June 5, health workers in Montevideo's Hospital de Clínicas, a teaching hospital, initiated a 36-hour strike. At issue is the shortage of medications, bandages and other health supplies, speed-up of health workers and management's alleged "disrespect" of the union

apparatus—La Unión de Trabajadores del Hospital de Clínicas (UTHC).

The UTHC bureaucracy had delayed the beginning of the strike since March 2025. Even so, at the last minute, UTHC leaders offered to postpone the job action.

The hospital employs 2,500 non-teaching workers who joined the strike.

Making things worse was the death of a patient, suffering from a psychiatric crisis, who was shot several times by the police inside the hospital, supposedly for disobeying instructions from workers in the emergency room. The death of the patient underscored to health workers the need for the hiring of psychiatric nurses and the training of emergency room workers.

Despite this incident, a spokesperson for the striking workers indicated that the hospital has no plans to hire new personnel.

United States

Teachers in Baltimore County, Maryland will work to rule to protest substandard wage proposal

The union representing 9,000 teachers in Baltimore County, Maryland, announced May 29 that its union representatives had approved a motion to institute a work-to-rule policy as negotiations between the county and the union have ground to a halt. The decision comes in the wake of teacher demonstrations two days earlier and the county's release of a budget that will cut the school district's finances by millions of dollars.

In the previous contract, the Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO) and the district agreed to a 5 percent wage increase, due to kick in in 2025. But the district now says it can't afford the raise and won't pay it out until January 1, 2026.

The union has charged that the failure to implement wage increases has resulted in the resignation of 800 teachers from the district in each of the last four years. Another measure by the district to cut pay was to reclassify school counselors and psychologists from 12-month to 10-month employees.

District negotiators are pointing to a \$71.68 million district budget gap in the general fund. However, the district superintendent was recently awarded a 5 percent raise by the board.

The union's decision to approve a work-to-rule policy is to conform to Maryland state law, which bars teacher strikes. TABCO states that the policy "is meant to highlight the unpaid work educators do before and after school, on weekends, and during our lunch and planning periods."

One-day strike by Chicago hotel workers seeking their first union contract

Workers at the Holiday Inn Chicago Downtown carried out a one-day strike May 30 after 17 months of bargaining by UNITE HERE Local 1 had failed to bring about a first contract as management refuses to negotiate seriously. The hotel workers voted unanimously more than two years ago to be represented by UNITE HERE.

The Texas-based Level X Group raised over \$20 million to acquire the Holiday Inn Chicago Downtown about four years ago, under conditions where the hotel industry had been widely affected by the pandemic and its workforce taken advantage of.

The strike by UNITE HERE was an unfair labor practices strike and isolates the Holiday Inn workers from union workers at some 25 hotels represented by the union throughout the Chicago region. According to

UNITE HERE, the Holiday Inn Chicago Downtown workers make \$6 an hour less than other Chicago hotel workers. In June of 2024, UNITE HERE merely called for a boycott of the hotel.

Champaign County, Illinois, workers vote by 96 percent for a strike to secure wages and healthcare

The union representing Champaign County, Illinois, public employees announced May 29 that 96 percent of the bargaining unit had voted to grant strike authorization after months of fruitless negotiations. "We've been at the bargaining table for about six months and I think the county employees are getting frustrated with the progress that we've been making," stated Natalie Nabel, a union staff representative, to the *News-Gazette*.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 900 has not revealed details of negotiations, only saying that they seek "fair wages and affordable health insurance." Emily Rodriguez, Champaign County Board vice chair, said management is offering wage increases of 3 percent the first year, followed by a 2 percent increase in year two. The board has attempted to cloak these meager increases with one-time bonuses.

The board is falling back on the fact that the county faces a \$4 million budget gap to justify their miserly contract proposal. AFSCME has indicated they are not pressing for an actual strike. Local 900 President Cecilia Phillips says of a strike, "I don't know what that looks like."

Minnesota state workers picket, threaten strike, over forced return to office

State workers in Minnesota staged a picket last week in St. Paul over the order by Democratic Governor Tim Walz for a part-time return to the office. Employees living less than 50 miles from work must spend at least half their work time in the office.

Two unions encompassing nearly 40,000 state workers—the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—are in contract talks with the state and face a June 30 contract expiration. Rising employee healthcare costs are also an issue.

The earliest state employees could legally strike is in late summer, once contracts expire, and after 45 days of mediation followed by 10 days' notice.

Canada

DHL couriers and drivers locked out nationwide

About 2,100 truck drivers, couriers, warehouse and clerical workers were locked out Sunday by DHL Express Canada management. The workers, members of Unifor, operate across the country. About one-third of the unionized workforce are the delivery truck drivers who are employed as owner-operators of their own vehicles.

DHL is a German-owned trans-national parcel delivery company that seeks growth "opportunities" in North America as the federal Post Office workers in both the United States and Canada face schemes to cut,

dismantle and ultimately privatize delivery operations. In Canada, a 32-day strike last December by postal workers was ended by a patently unconstitutional back-to-work order engineered by the Liberal government. When the terms of that order expired last month, officials of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers resisted worker calls for renewed strike action and instead have simply ordered an overtime ban.

DHL workers, who voted last month by 97 percent for strike action, have been resisting company attempts to impose massive concessions in any new contract. These include changes to the driver pay system that would produce a significant pay cut. Drivers would also be required to drive as far as 100 kilometers just to get to their delivery routes, with no compensation. DHL also seeks contract language to make it easier to lay off workers.

With Unifor officials delaying any mobilization of its membership to conduct a nationwide strike even after a strong 97 percent strike vote held last month, DHL issued the required 72-hour lockout notice last week and began recruiting and training replacement workers in an effort to get ahead of a new federal anti-scab provision that will take effect on June 20. That law restricts the use of replacement workers during strikes or lockouts in federally regulated industries that include transportation, banking and telecommunications.

Only after the DHL lockout began and a scab workforce was activated did Unifor officials, clearly placed on their back foot, issue their own belated strike call.

DHL spokesperson Pamela Duque Rai has already issued a statement assuring customers, “As part of its contingency plan, DHL Express has sourced temporary labour resources. All DHL’s actions are fully compliant with current legislation.” Rai continued, “With the implementation of these proactive measures, we are pleased to confirm that we can sustain our operations throughout our Canadian network, and we do not anticipate significant disruptions to our service.”



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