

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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*The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.*

## Argentina: Mass protest in defense of public health

Health workers from Buenos Aires' Garrahan Children's Hospital, one of the most important in Argentina and Latin America, protested on July 17 over the ever-worsening working conditions and hunger-wages imposed by the Javier Milei administration. Over 90 social and human rights organizations were represented at the protests.

The health workers included members of the Garrahan Hospital Technical and Professional workers Association (APyT), the Self-Employed Workers Collective, and all the health workers at the hospital.

Supporting the Buenos Aires protest were health workers from other cities, as well as parents, retirees, children, students, and injured workers. In Buenos Aires the enormous protest marched from the National Legislature to the Country's government house.

Health workers are demanding wage increases to make up for the lost buying power, following years of inflation, in order to stop the wave of resignations (over 220 Garrahan workers have quit this year). The health workers are also demanding decent working conditions, and an end to speed-ups and to the exploitation of temps and contingent workers.

A resident doctor described conditions at Garrahan: "We work 60 to 70 hours a week, and are paid less than 800 US dollars a month. The attacks on Garrahan workers are part of war against the entire public health system in Argentina."

## Argentine airline pilots strike

On July 19, airline pilots from every category went on a one-day strike against a government decree lengthening flying times, shortens rest periods for flight crews and suppresses items designed to reduce tiredness.

Pilots approved the decision to strike on June 26.

Pilots warned that this decree raises serious safety concerns, warning the Milei government that it would bear the responsibility for deaths and injuries. At the same time, many of the strikers declared that they do not expect any changes, charging the government with hiding behind the "national interest" to avoid cancelling the decree.

## Brazilian Government workers protest in Natal

On Monday, July 14, hundreds of government workers marched and rallied in the eastern city of Natal, capital of Rio Grande Do Norte, Brazil's easternmost province. The workers occupied the streets of Cidade Alta, condemning recently imposed administrative reforms attacking healthcare, education and Social Security.

Among the demonstrators were nurses and nursing technicians, public school teachers, Social Security workers, bank employees, Department of Motor Vehicles employees, administrative technicians and many others.

The new reforms expand the use of temporary workers and outsources, while paying bonuses in lieu of wage increases. Wages for Natal public employees have not increased since 2013. The new rules also delay workers' retirements. In addition, workers complain of terrible working conditions and retaliation by the city administration of Paulinho Freire against workers who speak out.

## Brazilian oil workers protest

Last week, hundreds of contingent workers from LCD—an outside contractor for the Petrobras oil company and its logistics partner Transpetro—carried out protests across the city of Rio de Janeiro, including street blockages and rallies at the Rio de Janeiro Petrobras headquarters. They are demanding to be paid wages that are owed to them. Petrobras management has refused to meet with the contingent workers.

## Chile: Casino workers strike

Workers in the city of Talcahuano employed by the Marina del Sol casino went on strike last week. The walkout was triggered by the replacement of full-time workers with temps, and the imposition of arbitrary absence and lateness "fines" by management, even against workers that call in sick.

The strikers are demanding wage increases and full Christmas bonuses.

Strikers point out that the Casino is making record profits in the aftermath of covid restrictions, even while the company pretends that "there is no money."

## California farm workers to strike against ICE raids

Organizers in Southern California have called for a strike by farm labor workers to protest immigration raids against field workers. It comes in the wake of recent raids that rounded up hundreds of farm workers in several fields in Camarillo, California. In one raid, a farm worker died while falling off a roof.

At a rally in downtown Los Angeles on July 14, speakers called for broader support for the strike and a boycott of farm products. “Now it’s not just unsafe with the conditions they have to go through to pick the fruits and vegetable in the fields, now they have to have fear over their heads every day, whether for them or a loved one or someone they’re working with right next to them,” said a speaker.

Flor Martinez, who organized the rally, said, “This strike is not just for us, it’s for the soul of this country... Who feeds your children? Will you stand with the people behind your food? Because a nation that eats from exploited hands is a nation in crisis.”

Flor pointed out that 80 percent of all fruits and nuts grown in the United States are produced in California. Another 60 percent of all vegetables and 90 percent of grapes used in the wine industry also come from California.

## Pennsylvania iron workers strike nears three-month mark

Eight striking ironworkers for Greco Steel Products rallied in Pittsburgh July 17, as their strike for a first contract nears three months while management has refused to negotiate. Workers first unionized in October of 2024, and say that they are underpaid.

But a primary focus of their struggle is hazardous working conditions. In July of 2023, 42 year-old Greco ironworker Joe Gazzo fell through a hole in the roof of the Pine-Richland High School while renovating the school’s gymnasium. “It took my breath away. It’s the ultimate safety concern; it should have never happened, and we can’t let it happen again,” Greco worker Jesse Shoedel told WPXI.

The decision to seek union representation was largely sparked by Gazzo’s death. The work of a structural ironworker “is the fifth-deadliest job in the world,” said a worker.

“Our harnesses, the yo-yos we use every day, and the slings we work with are not being inspected and are fraying,” said another worker. The failure of the company to negotiate led to the strike back on April 28. “Enough is enough, so we dropped our tools and went on strike.”

## Police threaten arrest of strikers at Toromont’s Caterpillar refurbishing plant

Last week, police descended on a peaceful picket line at Toromont’s Caterpillar component remanufacturing plant in the town of Bradford, just north of Toronto. They kept close watch on the picketers throughout the day and threatened union officials with arrest. It was the third time in a week that police had been called by management to attend the picket line.

The strike by 120 skilled and semi-skilled workers, members of Unifor, is now beginning its third week in pursuit of a contract with industry standard wages, benefits and working conditions. The facility restores “near end-of-life” machinery for use in construction and mining operations. The workers, members of Unifor, are fighting for a first collective agreement in the wake of the plant’s “grand opening” in mid-May.

Over the past week, picketers have been on the alert for attempts by management to move out essential parts and equipment from the plant to other sites. Although picketers had been allowing management to cross their lines at intervals, they nonetheless spent time looking into their vehicles when they left the facility to ensure no components were being smuggled out.

Unifor local vice-president Dustin Philp told reporters that it was the workers’ right to prevent the removal of materials from a strikebound plant. However, he did signal to management, as is the practice of the entire Unifor bureaucracy, that even though workers would “lose a ton of power”, the union would bow to any court injunction that allows the removal of materials.

## Oshawa, Ontario truckers and technicians on strike

About 40 workers, members of the Teamsters union, went on strike last week to demand a 10 per cent wage increase over 3 years. Management at Canada Cartage have offered only 8 percent. Workers are already chronically underpaid, earning an average of \$23 per hour in the Greater Toronto conurbation, one of the most expensive areas in the country.

The workers perform “high value” deliveries to critical installations for Bell and Telus communications, install automated bank machines and play a key role in warehousing shipments for major corporate clients. Management is striving to push through an inferior contract to set a precedent for future contract negotiations between Teamsters truckers and the giant Walmart network.



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