

Workers Struggles: The Americas

National strike in Ecuador against Noboa administration expands; Alberta teachers begin province-wide strike

6 October 2025

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National strike in Ecuador against Noboa administration expands

October 5 marks 14 days since the beginning of a national strike against the fascist administration of President Daniel Noboa conducted in the face of a policy of brutal repression and illegal arrests directed at the entire working class. Every day, more workers join the strike.

This week, artists and university workers and students joined in the protests in Quito, Ecuador's capital, marching and carrying banners denouncing the fascist president. The demonstrators were forced by the violent police repression to seek refuge on the campus of the Central University of Ecuador, but kept up their protest, chanting slogans and beating drums.

The strike, which includes peaceful protests and road blockages, had been repeatedly hit by police and military repression, not only with tear gas, but also with beatings and military tanks. At least two strikers have been killed.

The strike began in response to a decree, signed by Noboa, that eliminated subsidies on diesel fuel, causing a rise in prices for bus fares, food, and other necessities.

Mass demonstration in Argentina against President Milei's attack on children's health

Health workers from Buenos Aires' Garrahan Pediatric Hospital rallied at the National Legislature in the first of several planned protests against President Javier Milei's veto of the Law of Pediatric Emergencies.

The veto was justified by the government as necessary for the preservation of a balanced federal budget. For health workers the veto was a direct attack on workers and patients' rights.

The demonstration also denounced the continuing crisis at the Garrahan Hospital due to government budget cuts, cuts in real wages, forced resignation, and deteriorating conditions.

The health workers were joined by students—the Milei administration also recently vetoed a public university finance law.

Garrahan workers insist that health, education, and pensions are basis human rights that cannot be denied funding.

Argentine police escalate repression against retirees

On Wednesday October 1, pensioners rallied at Argentina's legislature and were met with savage repression.

Agents of the Federal Police and national gendarmes used pepper spray and launched tear gas and rubber bullets against the march and rally (which takes place every Wednesday). At least one demonstrator was arrested; 20 others were injured.

The attack began with Federal Police spraying pepper spray directly on demonstrators' faces. Many of them were left unable to open their eyes, as they were helped by first aid teams.

Victor, one of the wounded, declared to a local TV station: "We were trying to turn around when I was grabbed by four gendarmes, they kicked my back." He was then arrested. Other demonstrators confirmed the attack and described the purpose of their protests: "We come here because we are paid 300 lucas (300,000 pesos, or US\$ 200) per month. We do not have money for medicine."

Veracruz, Mexico health workers protest

Health workers employed by the Luis F. Nachón hospital in Xalapa, Veracruz state, began a protest on October 4. The workers are demanding that the hospital reverse a suspension to food services to which they are entitled. Over 100 hospital employees—who work 12 hours per day—including doctors, medical students, and emergency room personnel—are involved in the protest, though not on strike.

One of the protesters, Dora Rendón, MD, interviewed by the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*, declared: "They are not giving us the meals that we are entitled to. There is no money for food; we are working, and we need nourishment to keep working."

This is the latest of several protests in Veracruz hospitals and clinics involving health workers. A few weeks ago, health workers employed by the Veracruz Regional Hospital protested over the lack of medical supplies and deteriorating equipment. In addition, cleaning personnel, employed by a private contractor, have stopped work due to non-payment of wages.

Vermont dairy workers enter second week on strike

Some 60 dairy workers are in their second week on strike at a Dairy

Farmers of America plant in St. Albans city, Vermont. Members of Teamsters Local 597 walked off the job September 25 after management failed to meet their demand for improved work conditions, an 8 percent increase on hourly pay that matches other dairy plants, and improved rules on overtime.

Workers held a one-day strike in September that failed to achieve any results. Based in Kansas, the company made \$108 million in net income in 2022 on \$24.5 billion in sales. The company has 18,000 employees and its executives' average pay range is between \$184,278 and \$343,985.

Alan Boutin told vtdigger.org he was terminated about a year ago and was only hired back as the strike began. Management doesn't keep their promises, he complained: "There's a lot of BS going on here. It shouldn't be that way."

Pennsylvania nursing home workers set to strike eight Valley West facilities October 14

About 750 nursing home workers at eight Valley West nursing homes in Pennsylvania voted by a 97 percent margin to launch a three-day strike on October 14 demanding safe staffing and transparency over the spending of public funds on operations. Two other facilities operated by Valley West will not strike, but workers there will engage in informational pickets on October 16.

Valley West purchased the ten nursing homes in 2024 in the wake of a bankruptcy filing by the previous owner, Guardian Healthcare. The SEIU obtained an agreement with the new owner to honor the previous contract with Guardian Healthcare. That included a wage re-opener that was to be negotiated two months ago. But Valley West has attended only one bargaining session and has not put forward a tentative contract proposal.

The bargaining unit comprises nurses, nursing aides, housekeeping, dietary, laundry and maintenance workers. The website nursinghomedatabase.com seems to indicate that Valley West is new to the nursing home business as the ten Western and Central Pennsylvania nursing homes are the only facilities under its management.

Alberta teachers begin provincewide strike

Fifty-one thousand Alberta public school teachers embarked on a determined strike Monday. The strike will impact some 700,000 students at some 2,500 schools. The strike action follows the second rejection by the membership of a miserable contract proposal that had been supported by teachers' union officials. The teachers had voted last week by 89.5 percent to reject the deal.

Demonstrating the significant support for the teachers amongst students and parents, more than 20,000 people rallied in Edmonton and Calgary on the eve of the strike. In Calgary on Friday, students staged their own walkouts to demand that the government increase funding for education.

Wages and the underfunding of the education system are central issues in the labour dispute. Responding to the austerity policies of the right-wing Alberta government of Premier Danielle Smith, the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association is offering no pay increase for teachers larger than 12 percent over four years, which is completely unacceptable to rank-and-file teachers, who have endured years of wage restraint. In May, 62 percent of teachers rejected a mediator's recommendation that had also been recommended by the union leadership, and in June, 94.5 percent of teachers voted for strike action.

Teachers' wages have increased by only 5.8 percent total over the past 13 years. Most of those years saw teachers' pay frozen without any raise at all. The last teachers' strike in 2002 involved more than 20,000 teachers at 22 school districts. They were ordered back to work by the ruling Conservative provincial party of then-Premier Ralph Klein after 17 days.

British Columbia government workers expand job actions

Now in the sixth week of strike activity, the 34,000-strong BC General Employees' Union has broadened its job action to another 900 workers at an additional 22 work sites. Job actions have taken the form of overtime bans, work-to-rules and full or partial walkouts. Picketing at the large Liquor Board Distribution Centers is one of the centerpieces of the job action, as it has significantly reduced supply to the many local liquor stores throughout the province.

The most recent mobilizations announced last week includes varying job actions at 20 more BC Liquor and Cannabis Stores, frontline staff from the Ministry of Environment and Parks, Children and Family Development workers, Energy and Climate Solutions employees and Water, Land and Resource Stewardship workers.

In mid-July, when contract negotiations between the union and the province soured, the BCGEU membership voted 92.7 percent in favour of strike action. However, in the first weeks of the strike, union officials largely restricted actions to overtime bans amongst a small portion of its membership. Only 6,000 public service workers—less than a fifth of the 34,000 under the expired collective agreement—were initially mobilized, with only 2,000 actually walking off the job.

There are now about 17,000 workers engaged in some form of job action, with about 14,000 of those out on strike. Union president Paul Finch told reporters last week that a "significant" escalation of the strike will occur in the coming days. Workers are demanding wage increases after years of wage erosion, cost-of-living adjustments, and access to remote work, among other issues. The New Democratic Party provincial government has rejected the BCGEU's proposal for a meagre 8.25 percent wage increase over two years, announcing that its most recent offer—a paltry 1.5 percent in year one and 2 percent in year two—is "fair and reasonable" and necessary so it can "maintain" its fiscal plan.

This year the provincial government is negotiating contracts with unions representing 452,000 BC public sector workers, including the Hospital Employees' Union, BC Teachers' Federation and BC Nurses' Union.



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