

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Mass protests against nationwide electricity failure in Dominican Republic, Mexican teachers hold 48-hour national strike

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

Mass protests against nationwide electricity failure in Dominican Republic

On November 11, mass protests took place across the Dominican Republic, triggered by a nationwide electricity blackout. The blackout, which affected all the country's power plants, including the key Punta Catalina thermoelectric plant, affected public services, including hospitals and banks, small businesses, transportation, and communication services, causing chaos in urban areas.

In response demonstrators took to the streets, blocking roads and burning tires.

Electric service in the Dominican Republic is unreliable and very expensive, with frequent blackouts and almost constant brownouts in the poorer neighborhoods. Dominican working families often find it difficult to pay their bill at the end of the month.

Mexican teachers hold 48-hour national protest strike

On November 13 and 14, Mexican teachers members of the CNTE teachers union carried out a 48-hour national strike that included protest marches and rallies in Aguascalientes, Baja California, Durango, Colima, Sinaloa, Yucatán, Mexico Stata, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Michoacán, Guerrero and Zacatecas. The main issue was pensions.

Educators occupied toll booths, blocked roads and took over public buildings, in defense of their retirement.

In Mexico City, workers, demanding to speak with President Sheinbaum, surrounded the national legislature, which was heavily guarded by police and fenced in. Police used tear gas against the demonstrators.

CNTE teachers are now threatening a 72-hour strike this week.

Generation Z protest in Peru demands reforms

On November 14 hundreds of members of Peru's Generation Z (Generación Z de Perú) carried out a mass protest in Lima and other cities

condemning the assassination of hip hop artist Eduardo Ruiz Sáenz by undercover police at a previous protest march on October 15. The demonstrators also condemned the newly installed government of José Jerí for its disregard of demands for social reform.

In Lima and other cities, including Cuzco and Puno the demonstrators were joined by workers denouncing criminal gang attacks on bus drivers and construction workers. In Lima bus drivers carried out a protest strike as well.

In Lima, the demonstrators defied government prohibition to rally in Plaza San Martin square, traditional site of political rallies, and confronted a mass police presence. As a column of protesters was leaving the University of San Marcos, police attempted to corral the protesters.

Indigenous groups protest Cop30 climate summit in Belém, Brazil

On Saturday, November 15, tens of thousands of protesters marched in the streets of Belém, Brazil, under the broiling sun (35C.). The march included Indigenous groups, trade unionists, and youth from Brazil and other countries, demanding climate justice and denouncing the continuous oil exploration and production in Brazil and other countries.

This was the latest in a line of protests since the Cop30 conference began a week ago.

On November 11, dozens of demonstrators rallied at the climate conference to protest the effect of global warming on people's health. The demonstrators blocked the normal exits from the conference, as delegates were leaving the assembly area.

The "climate crisis is a health crisis", chanted many in the rally. In the Amazon region there has been an increase in Dengue fever and in respiratory ailments, caused by the rise in temperatures.

Members of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) also occupied Cop30's "agrizone" area, 2 kilometers away, to protest agribusinesses for their complicity in the global climate crisis. MST leader Divina Lopez pointed out that the conference is "being dominated by agribusinesses, that seek to increase their profits and create a "green" image, at the expense of nature and rural communities."

Among the sponsors of Cop30 are transnational agribusinesses, including Bayer, Nestle, Pepsico and Syngenta. The latter is a major producer of Profenfos, an organophosphate insecticide that contaminates drinking water in rural areas.

Maine nurses slated to launch two-day strike over unsafe staffing

Registered nurses at Houlton Regional Hospital in northern Maine are slated to go out on a two-day strike starting November 18. Members of the Maine State Nurses Association (MSNA) voted to unionize back in January 2024 and granted strike authorization last September. The old agreement expired back in November of 2024.

Nurses are demanding measures to combat under-staffing. Among the issues that lead to this is the fact that Houlton nurses are the lowest paid in Aroostook County.

Registered nurse Michael MacArthur explained how under-staffing emerges in the hospital setting. “We treat everyone in the emergency room—it might be a toe or it might be something far more serious—and if a patient has a serious condition it might require not just one nurse but two nurses or even three. And that would mean that the nurses left on the floor or nurse would have to manage the rest of the patients by themselves.”

Strike authorized at Las Vegas Casino after two years of failed negotiations

Members of Teamsters Local 986 at the Rio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, overwhelmingly approved a strike authorization last week after two years of failed contract negotiations. The previous contract expired in April 2024. The union has filed numerous unfair labor practices charges, but has not revealed the details of negotiations.

Close to 100 workers are involved in the contract struggle at the Las Vegas off-strip facility. It is currently owned by Dreamscape, an affiliate of Hyatt Resorts which has concentrated on some \$300 million in renovations to the facility.

The Teamsters have not given a specific date for a walkout, but attendance is expected to rise during the Thanksgiving weekend with the Formula One Las Vegas Grand Prix taking place November 20 through 22. “We hope management has enough sense to resolve this issue now,” said Local 986 President Tim Vera.

Skilled tradesmen strike Michigan project seeking union representation

Plumbers and pipefitters went on strike outside the Shaw Walker building in Muskegon, Michigan to demand union representation. The 7 picketers work for Moore Mechanical, one of the contractors working on the redevelopment project to convert the facility into a housing and commercial space.

Back in October workers held an informational picket to press for union recognition with the United Association (UA) Local 174 in an effort to obtain better wages, benefits and working conditions. But Moore Mechanical has refused to respond and the National Labor Relations Board has not investigated the workers’ complaint.

Ryan Bennett, a business agent for Local 174 is not requesting that other skilled trades working the project honor the UA picket line. “There are other union crafts on the job, and we’ve told them to keep working,” Bennett told WZZM13. “We don’t want to disrupt the project. This is a big deal for our community, and we want it to move forward.”

Charlottetown, PEI water workers continue strike

About 30 water and sewage workers in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island are continuing their strike for wage increases as well as job seniority and job description protections. The workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, (CUPE) have just entered their fourth month on strike against city management. They have been without a contract for two and a half years and participated in at least 17 conciliation sessions without reaching an agreement.

Workers are demanding a 3.5 percent annual wage increase in each year of a four-year contract. The City Council has only offered a 2 percent per year wage increase. There are no negotiations currently scheduled.

The city has deployed managers and also contracted scab labour to cover the duties of the strikers that include maintaining the city’s water and sewage systems, repairing water and sewer lines, performing inspections and attending to water main ruptures.

Locked out Windsor Titan Tool and Die workers hit by truck on picket line

In the 17th week of a lockout in Windsor, Ontario 3 workers picketing the auto parts plant were struck last week by a truck that was leaving the premises. Minor injuries were sustained by the workers. Although protocols allow for pickets to stop vehicles for 15 minutes before allowing them to proceed, union officials have called for a police investigation into the incident.

The auto parts workers, members of Unifor, voted unanimously last month to reject massive concessions demanded by Titan Tool and Die management. Prior to the July 31 lockout, management had already laid off 40 of its 65 workers. After the lockout was announced, Unifor officials responded by pleading for a negotiated plant closure agreement.

Instead, company negotiators presented a new contract proposal that sought to obliterate virtually every significant clause in the previous agreement. The concession demands include a three-year wage freeze, a new permanent lower wage grid for new hires, complete elimination of cost-of-living and lump sum wage supplements, the massive slashing of the pension scheme that would cost workers \$13,500 over the life of the contract, mandatory overtime and elimination of retirement health benefits for many workers.

In late August, management removed much of the raw materials and essential equipment from the plant, transferring the materials to the company’s facility in Michigan. Titan Tool management had already begun to move some of its molds and product orders across the border shortly before its lockout began. Last April, after the union blocked a truck from carrying materials out of the premises, the company quickly secured a court injunction allowing them to move material from the plant.



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