

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Bolivia general strike call as mass protests against price rises continue; Ski patrollers strike Telluride, Colorado resort

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

Bolivia general strike call as mass protests against price rises continue

Bolivia's Central Trade Union (COB) approved a general strike combined with weekly national protest rallies against the Rodrigo Paz government. Since December 22 thousands of mine workers have taken part in the demonstrations, setting up roadblocks and surrounding government offices. At the same time the police have responded with stepped up repression.

The protest strike and mobilizations were triggered by Paz's decree abolishing subsidies and controls on fuel, food and transportation prices, impoverishing workers in every sector, as well as farmers and small business people.

Meanwhile the protests continue: On December 26 a mass protest took place in the city of Cochabamba in central Bolivia, against the presidential decree. Among the marchers were factory and construction workers, teachers, health workers, housewives and students.

Hundreds protest Argentina mining projects

Hundreds of workers and farmers protested on December 23 in the Andean city of Mendoza to oppose the provincial government's backing of mineral projects that risk water and ecosystems in the region.

Demonstrators marched through downtown Mendoza and rallied at the provincial government house; the march was seven blocks long. They chanted and carried signs demanding the cancellation of recently approved legislation in favor of mining interests that would open over 30 mining projects in the foothills of the Andes Mountain chain.

One of largest is the PSG Copper Project operated by the Swiss firm Zonda Metals GmBH, which had been cancelled by the legislature in 2011 and which the legislature is now allowing to proceed, despite proven consequences to the water availability and environmental degradation.

Protesters demanded that the government enforce existing prohibitions on the use of cyanide, mercury and other toxic substances that contaminate the environment, pollute air and water, and adversely impact people's health.

Movement of Excluded Workers feeds 5,000 victims of government austerity in Argentina

On Christmas Day, Argentina's Movement of Excluded Workers (MTE) organized a Christmas dinner rally in front of the federal legislature in Buenos Aires. In addition to food tables, the MTE brought in barbers, hair dressers, showers, health workers, toys and entertainment for the thousands of impoverished workers, victims of the policies of President Javier Milei and of previous administrations. The rally lasted all afternoon, until midnight.

The food rally exposed the indifference of the Milei administration to the poor and homeless, even during the traditional end-of-year celebrations, under conditions of increasing unemployment and homelessness.

As its name indicates, the MTE is a union formed by workers that have been excluded from the labor market and survive on informal jobs, such as bottle and cardboard recycling.

Monthly food inflation is rising by more than 3 percent per month in Argentina, while wages are stagnant and unemployment is rising as the government abolishes food aid and medical care. Relative to 2024, Christmas expenditures have fallen by 7 percent, making this the most austere Christmas season in recent memory.

Thousands of Hondurans march against electoral fraud

On the evening of Friday December 27, thousands of Hondurans marched against the official proclamation of Nasry Asfura as president elect. The marchers rallied at the headquarters of the Nacional Electoral Council (CNE) in Tegucigalpa, the nation's capital. The protesters are demanding that the CNE make public all the electoral ballots, from the November 30 vote.

The demonstrators were in part reacting to reports of irregularities in 400 ballot counts.

The demonstrators also denounced US intervention in the elections, which, they insist, means that Washington helped engineer Nasry Asfura's election.

Ski patrollers strike Telluride, Colorado resort

The 78 members of the Telluride Professional Ski Patrol Association went on strike December 27 after management for Colorado's Telluride Mountain ski resort refused to come to an agreement to equalize wages with other resort workers. Instead, the ownership has ordered the ski resort to shut down leaving tourists who have paid some \$10,000 for their vacation, unable to access downhill slopes.

"We exhausted every idea to avert this situation, and we compromised below our comfort level and bottom line to move the conversation forward in good faith," said a release by the union. "Instead of negotiating, the Telluride Ski and Golf Resort (TSG) brought us back to the table this past week with no ideas, solutions, nor improvements to move towards the middle. TSG never attempted to increase their offer whatsoever and completely wasted our time leading into the Holiday season."

Telluride Mountain resort is owned by California real-estate mogul, Chuck Horning. The website Chuck has been set up to air allegations of misconduct, both financial and personal, against Horning. Under his ownership the 2,500 people living in Telluride have suffered, as workers struggle to keep their heads above water while the median home price has increased to \$4 million. Stickers declaring "Eliminate Billionaires" are plastered across the city.

Teamsters file charges against Airgas as seven-month strike drags on

The Teamsters union filed unfair labor practice charges against Airgas, a French-owned subsidiary of the multinational Air Liquide, as a long-running strike continues against 15 of the company's US facilities. The charges allege "unlawful threats, lockouts, discharge, and retaliation against workers for exercising their legal rights and failing to provide notice and an opportunity to bargain."

The strike against Airgas commenced back on June 2 when members of Teamsters Local 701 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, walked out. They were followed by Teamsters Local 507 in Cleveland and Teamsters Local 283 in Ferndale, Michigan. Thereafter, workers expanded the strike across unionized Airgas plants in 11 states.

According to the Teamsters, once the strikes began, "Airgas illegally retaliated against workers, unlawfully terminating and suspending members in Pennsylvania and California; locking out members in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Ohio, Rhode Island, New York, and Michigan; threatening members in Massachusetts, California, Rhode Island, Ohio, and New Jersey; and permanently replacing members in Ohio and New Jersey, for exercising their contractually-protected right to honor extended picket lines and to strike."

Shawn Diaz, a shop steward with Teamsters Local 701 said in a union release that Airgas acts "like they are above the law." The

company has accumulated \$8 million in legal penalties from OSHA, EPA and the NLRB. A Florida district court ordered Airgas to pay \$7 million for hazardous waste violations.

But none of these fines and rulings has seriously impacted Airgas, the largest distributor of specialty gases in the United States. The company accrued \$3.8 million in net profits last year. And the current National Labor Relations Board, further debilitated by the Trump administration, will provide no relief.

Porter Airlines flight dispatchers move towards strike position

Thirty-six flight dispatchers employed by Porter Airlines at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport are now entering a 21-day "cooling off" period after a contract conciliation period with federal mediators concluded on December 29 with no agreement. The workers, members of the Canadian Airline Dispatchers Association (CALDA), will now be in a strike position on January 19.

The flight dispatchers are responsible for analyzing local weather and airfield conditions, overseeing airplane fuel and weight requirements, coordinating with air traffic control to manage disruptions and a number of other key tasks. Earlier this month the dispatchers voted by 100 percent for strike action if they do not reach an agreement for a first contract with the airline.

CALDA alleges that Porter is preparing to employ scab labour to replace workers in the event of a strike. Porter is the third largest airline headquartered in Canada, behind Air Canada and WestJet. It services major cities across the country as well as key hubs in the United States. The previously non-union company has been subject to several successful union recognition drives and first contract negotiations amongst pilots, flight attendants, ground crew and customer service representatives over the past year.

The Canadian airline industry has recently been affected by powerful strikes by Air Canada flight attendants and WestJet mechanics that were eventually scuttled by government interventions and union treachery. Other threatened job actions from pilots at WestJet and Air Transat caused further disruptions prior to contract settlements. Looking forward to the New Year, collective agreements with WestJet pilots and Air Canada mechanics and baggage handlers are expiring by the end of March 2026.



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