

# Striking Kaiser healthcare workers denounce the ICE murder of nurse Alex Pretti

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Thirty-one thousand registered nurses and other specialty healthcare professionals at Kaiser Permanente continued their strike across more than 200 hospitals and clinics in California and Hawaii.

The strike overlaps another strike by 15,000 nurses at four private nonprofit hospitals in New York which entered its third week. Together, the 46,000 healthcare workers on both coasts are fighting against unsafe conditions for staff and patients alike, with chronic understaffing causing exhaustion, injury and widespread burnout.

The Kaiser strike began only two days after the ICE murder of 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. Pretti was murdered while attempting to help a woman being assaulted by agents. The murder has sparked nationwide outrage, with workers across the country supporting a general strike against the Trump administration's rampage against democratic rights.

"It was murder. It definitely was a murder. He was just trying to protect those ladies from being pepper sprayed. He was just protecting them," said one veteran Kaiser nurse in Downey, California.

"It was really sad because he was an intensive care nurse working in the VA [Veterans Administration] hospital. He was a VA nurse, an ICU nurse, which is the most noble profession, in my opinion, aside from being a nurse. He served the veterans who served this country.

"The Trump administration called him as a 'domestic terrorist,' which is not the case, not the case at all. He was a US citizen. He didn't have any crimes before that. He was licensed to carry a gun, and he has never been criminally charged for anything.

"This is not the United States that I knew before. I don't recognize this country anymore."

When asked about the nurses' strike in New York, she responded, "Yes, I heard that the New York City nurses

have been on strike. They're going into their third week. Wow! I'd say, 'Stay strong. We're here with you. We are secure with you side by side. Stay strong. The issues are almost the same.'

"The general strike in Minnesota last Friday was all on social media. I would've liked to have been there." And when asked about a general strike across the country, she said, "I am there for you, too. I will be there. See you on the general strike."

Another nurse from Southern California commented, "They're trying to do pay cuts for some of our members. The CEO is making millions, and we're the problem.

"We sacrifice ourselves for our patients, and we gladly do it every day because that's what we signed up for. But not under these conditions. I've been a Kaiser nurse for nine years in the oncology unit, and it is a shame that the hospital leadership is not coming to the table and giving us what we deserve.

"I also think what happened to Alex Pretti, who was there trying to help a woman stand up and he was assassinated, is horrible. He did what nurses do, which is take care of each other, take care of others and that's what he was trying to do. He was trying to help somebody, and he did not deserve that. It was uncalled for and not necessary at all."

When asked about the response of the Trump administration to Pretti's murder, the nurse responded, "They say they are doing an investigation, but they shouldn't be opening their mouths and talking about things that they don't know anything about."

The worker also supported the call for a broader general strike. "If that's what it will take to be heard, then that's what it will take. And it's our right to protest peacefully. So a strike is also our right. And if we do it peacefully and that's how we can show that we need change, then I support it."

Workers on the picket line reported they are not

receiving strike pay, despite UNAC sitting on \$28 million in assets. Over 100 bureaucrats are still drawing salaries of more than \$200,000 a year.

Other expenses from public reporting sources include \$186,540 spent on airlines, \$1,031,569 on hotels, \$135,743 on restaurants and bakeries, and \$42,775 on one grocery store—all in 2024.

A worker in San Diego stated, “I support a general strike 100 percent, because both our strike and a general strike are about equality: equality socially and equality in health. We take care of everyone equally, and Alex Pretti took care of people in more ways than one. I also support connecting our strike with the nurses in New York.”

At the Kaiser Oakland picket line, workers were indignant about the murder of Pretti, and many expressed support for a general strike. The picket line included occupational therapists, nurse midwives, nurse anesthesiologists, physical therapists, and other professions present.

On the question of a general strike, one physical therapist responded “Say when and where, I’ll be there!” On the murder of Alex Pretti, he continued, “Not OK! Not OK! There are the our healthcare brothers, sisters, folks. These are the people who care for others. That is our job. That’s what they were doing when they were killed, caring for others. I will do that ‘till the day I die.”

In support of 15,000 striking Mt. Sinai nurses in New York, he continued, “Stand strong. You’re on the right side of history. We’re with you.”

Another group of nurses told WSWS reporters: “So as RNs here at Kaiser, we stand in solidarity with all the RNs and all the nurses over at New York City who are on strike. We stand in solidarity. Stay strong. We can do this! we all have to stand together and fight for, you know, what we deserve, what our patients deserve. So, yes, I agree with a general strike.”

Many strikers held handmade signs highlighting determination to fight for their patients and themselves, including “Midwives bend over backward for our patients, but we are not spineless!”

Responding to the right-wing slander campaign against Pretti, an occupational therapist explained, “We’re seeing with our eyes. We’re not listening with our ears. I feel horrible for his family, what they’re going through. And the rhetoric the government is spewing about this poor man at this time.”

Many strikers agreed that the union bureaucracy would not support a general strike and agreed that rank-and-file organizing was necessary to accomplish it. One worker

noted that the UNAC/UHCP did not even call out its own members in support of other UNAC/UHCP members on a separate contract.

The UNAC/UHCP bureaucracy wasted no time attempting to use the strike to support the Democratic Party. At the union’s invitation, Democratic California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond was given the floor at the Oakland picket line first thing Monday morning to stump for his gubernatorial campaign.

Thurmond has been superintendent since 2019. He has overseen numerous attacks on public education in California while serving under Governor Gavin Newsom. One of his earliest acts was to help shut down the 2019 teachers’ strikes in Los Angeles and Oakland. He also worked to negotiate a sellout contract for Sacramento teachers in 2022. He has also overseen a massive expansion of charter schools and the privatization of education across the state.

The intervention of the Democratic Party is aimed at containing the Kaiser struggle and isolating it from their class brothers and sisters in New York City and shutting down the strike as soon as possible.

The rank and file must not allow this to happen. The strike has intersected with broader struggles of the working class and the class nature of the state. The question of who determines staffing, wages and conditions is intrinsically bound up with the fight to defend democratic rights and against the efforts by Trump to set up dictatorship in the US.

Workers in California and Hawaii must hold mass meetings, elect rank-and-file committees composed of trusted nurses rather than bureaucrats and establish lines of contact with their class brothers and sisters in New York, Minneapolis and across the country and internationally.



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