

# New York nurses: Expand the strike to defeat mass firing threats from management!

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*Organize to expand the strike to defeat management's threats! Join the New York Healthcare Workers Rank-and-File Committee by filling out the form below.*

Management at NewYork-Presbyterian, Montefiore and Mount Sinai hospitals have issued an ultimatum aimed at crushing the strike by 15,000 nurses in New York City. After nurses have spent more than three weeks on the picket lines, the hospitals have declared that unless they return to work within roughly two weeks they will be permanently replaced. They have also said they will not return to the bargaining table unless the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) presents what they call a “bare-bones proposal.”

“They will be able to remove any gain we made in previous contracts: pensions, healthcare, certification differentials,” a striking nurse told the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The hospitals are attempting to break the strike by exhaustion and fear, forcing nurses to choose between surrender and unemployment.

The linchpin of management's strategy is the strategy for defeat by the NYSNA officials, who have isolated the strike to four out of 15 hospitals and have left nurses on the picket line without strike pay in the cold for three weeks. The union announced that it has already sent “a streamlined proposal,” a euphemism for the “bare-bones agreement” demanded by management. They were scheduled to meet Monday with hospital officials to try to end the strike, according to the *New York Post*.

The nurses “don't agree with taking their threat and not doing anything in return,” said the striking nurse. “We have yet to get an answer about why we are letting them threaten us like this.”

To defeat management's threats, nurses must organize to take the initiative out of the hands of the NYSNA officials. The fight cannot be waged through closed-door negotiations, legal maneuvers or appeals to corporate politicians. It requires independent organization and democratic control by nurses themselves. This is why healthcare workers took the step last week of forming the New York Healthcare Workers Rank-and-File Committee.

The healthcare systems are relying on the backing of the state and the political establishment to help them break the strike. New York Governor Kathy Hochul declared a disaster emergency to facilitate the importation of strikebreakers from other states. Mayor Zohran Mamdani has appeared on the picket lines while boasting of his “partnership” with Hochul. At the federal level, the Trump administration has made clear its hostility to healthcare workers and its readiness to use repression, as underscored by the killing of intensive care nurse Alex Pretti by federal agents in Minneapolis.

The hospitals believe these conditions allow them to threaten mass firings and impose contracts by fiat. But management has seriously misread the situation. They are acting as though the nurses have no support and the working class is in retreat, when in reality a broader movement is emerging:

- More than 31,000 Kaiser Permanente healthcare workers are on strike in California and Hawaii. They are fighting the exact same issues as New York City nurses, above all, unsafe staffing ratios. This shows the conditions exist for a national movement in defense of public health.

✚ In Minneapolis, mass protests against ICE raids have drawn more than 100,000 into the streets, with tens of thousands protesting in support around the country.

Calls are being raised nationwide for a general strike.

•The strike has overwhelming support among workers in New York City, who know that nurses are fighting for their patients, not just themselves. Across the country, anger is intensifying over social inequality, the enrichment of a tiny financial elite, and the use of police and state violence to suppress opposition.

The hospitals' threats are not expressions of confidence, but of nervousness. They are attempting to preempt a broader convergence of struggles by crushing the nurses before such a movement can take shape.

The union bureaucracy is allowing management to threaten workers because it is also terrified of such a movement, which would threaten their six-figure salaries and cozy relations with management and corporate politicians. The union has already cut its wage demands from 30 percent over three years to 18 percent.

It has hailed an agreement it claims will preserve health benefits at their current levels. In reality, the deal establishes committees tasked with identifying "cost savings" after ratification. These concessions were announced just days before the hospitals threatened mass firings.

Over recent days, NYSNA officials have enforced tighter, anti-democratic control of the picket lines, where numbers have been thinner than at the start of the strike. It is blocking nurses from speaking to reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* or distributing copies of the statement by the New York Nurses Rank-and-File Committee calling for an immediate expansion of the strike and the provision of strike pay.

That statement warned that "the bureaucracy of the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) is preparing to shut down the strike on management's terms." It declared: "The strike can be won, but only if healthcare workers take matters into their own hands. ... Healthcare workers must control the strategy and decisions of this struggle."

Making an appeal to the widening opposition throughout the country, the statement explained: "Healthcare workers defend life. When wealthy executives starve hospitals of staff and resources, they endanger patients; when the state kills a nurse in the streets, it signals that no one in the working class is safe from repression. Our struggle for staffing ratios, living

wages and full benefits is inseparable from the defense of democratic rights."

It concluded with a six-point program to win the strike:

- Expand the strike in New York now. Organize to bring out nurses at the nonprofit hospitals where strike notices were rescinded; coordinate stoppages and joint pickets to disrupt hospital operations until demands are met.

- Nurses must hold an emergency meeting to agree upon contractual red lines, including specific, enforceable staffing ratios, wage requirements and other terms without which no agreement can be made.

- No end to the strike without a full tentative agreement and a democratic vote.

- Provide immediate strike pay and other funding to ensure that workers can hold out until our demands are met.

- Organize roving pickets to reach out to transit, logistics, education, public-sector and other healthcare workers to prepare coordinated, cross-industry actions.

- Popularize and build for a sustained, nationwide mobilization, including an open-ended general strike, to defeat the Trump administration's occupations of cities and systematic violations of the Constitution.

The issues posed by this strike go far beyond the fate of a single contract. What is being decided is whether nurses will accept a future of permanent understaffing, eroding wages and authoritarian dictates enforced by the state and the union bureaucracy, or whether they will assert their collective strength as part of a growing movement of the working class.



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