

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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Latin America

Bolivia healthcare workers stage 24-hour protest strike

Health workers from across Bolivia carried out a 24-hour strike on Thursday April 9. The walkout was held to protest arbitrary layoffs and shortages of medications and medical equipment.

Union officials described the layoffs as a “jobs massacre” and accused the recently elected right-wing Rodrigo Paz administration of wanting to impose a non-union workforce.

In the city of Cochabamba, in central Bolivia, the striking workers also carried out a hunger strike. In Santa Cruz, Bolivia’s largest city, the strike, which also included wage demands, took place a day before, on April 8.

Argentina university educators protest

On Friday, April 10, University of Buenos Aires educators transformed that city’s central Plaza de Mayo square—across from the Casa Rosada government house—into open air classrooms in a public protest against starvation wages, describing the 6.7 percent salary increase, pushed by the Milei administration, as “miserable, much below accumulated inflation.” Professors, scientists and students participated in this all-day protest.

Arguing the need for a budget balance, the Milei offer openly disobeys decisions by the national legislature and the courts (The Law on University Financing). “We are defending the University and demanding what we are entitled to,” declared one of the demonstrators.

Depending on their position, in order to be made whole, university workers would need raises of between 40 and 55 percent. Many educators have been forced to take on second jobs.

Friday’s protest was the third in three weeks.

Students take over Guatemala’s San Carlos University

San Carlos University students belonging to the Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine and Zoology departments, protesting the reelection of University President Walter Mazariegos, whom they accuse of corruption and dictatorial methods, rallied and burned tires at the campus. They were attacked by Mazariegos’ guards, armed with Molotov weapons. Mazariegos routinely moves around campus surrounded by personal bodyguards, who are housed in a first-class private hotel.

The protesting students accuse Mazariegos of acts of corruption, and of imposing anti-democratic control over educators and students.

In a written statement, protesting students linked the crisis at San Carlos University to a “profound institutional break with democratic principles that in the past gave life to our educational institution.” San Carlos University “belongs to all Guatemalans; it is up to us to defend it. Our rally and occupation is not an act of violence; it is an act of defense of university democracy, lawfulness, and a defense of our right to a dignified education in a university that respects the voice of students and workers. ... To defend the university is to defend the future.”

San Carlos is the only public university in Guatemala.

São Paulo educators hold two-day protest strike

On April 8 and 9, municipal education workers in São Paulo carried out a 48-hour protest strike and rallies against Mayor Ricardo Nunes and his policies of wage freezes and attacks on their jobs. On Wednesday, the mobilization also included healthcare workers.

In addition to a raise that keeps up with inflation, the educators are demanding reduction in working hours and better career opportunities.

United States

Newsroom workers carry out one-day strike against

ProPublica

Some 150 members of the NewsGuild who work in ProPublica's newsroom held a 24-hour strike April 8 with picket lines outside offices in New York, Chicago and Washington D.C. The NewsGuild has been in negotiations for two and a half years with the investigative non-profit, seeking a first-time contract that addresses wages hit by inflation and contract language over terminations and a restriction to prevent layoffs provoked by AI.

Back on March 20, NewsGuild members voted by a 92 percent margin to authorize the strike despite management offering to expand severance for AI-related layoffs. The union has asked readers to boycott ProPublica's website and to decline attending a virtual event taking place on the day of the strike that promoted the organization's news app.

The NewsGuild has also filed an unfair-labor-practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board that accuses ProPublica of a "unilateral implementation of AI policy."

Call center workers at DirecTV vote strike authorization

The Communications Workers of America announced that some 300 customer call center workers for DirecTV in West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Colorado and Minnesota voted overwhelmingly to grant strike authorization as contract talks have not brought an agreement on wages, healthcare and working conditions. Workers are asking for additional time between calls rather than the current few seconds.

Workers rejected an earlier contract offer back on March 27 and the old agreement expired on February 14.

Minnesota sheet metal workers strike over healthcare

Sheet metal workers at Jones Metal in Mankato, Minnesota, walked out on strike April 7 over a deadlock on healthcare compensation. The 42 members of Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 voted unanimously to strike after company negotiators refused to improve their healthcare payments, which have not increased in the past 13 years, despite soaring costs.

In place of a healthcare plan, the company has provided a \$705 monthly stipend and that amount has remained stagnant for more than a decade. When negotiations first opened up, management proposed the stipend be phased out over the next two years.

Finally, the company proposed maintaining the stipend over

the course of a new three-year contract without any increase, which led to the unanimous contract rejection and strike.

Canada

Workers at 22 Nova Scotia long-term care homes go on strike

About 2,200 continuing care assistants; licensed practical nurses; support services, which includes environmental, housekeeping and laundry; occupational therapy aides and physiotherapy aides and maintenance workers in Nova Scotia went on strike Monday morning after many months of government stonewalling to reach a new contract. The workers, members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), are employed at 22 long-term care facilities in the province.

Some 42 long-term care facilities have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over the past six months. More locals are expected to call strikes soon, once their legal "waiting period" to activate job actions expire. Bargaining with the Conservative government of Premier Tim Houston has been an interminable "slow walk" over contracts that have expired more than two years ago.

The low-paid workers have been without a new contract since October 2023. The workers are demanding improvements to address the cost-of-living crisis, chronic understaffing, and to bring their pay—often less than \$19 per hour—in line with other Atlantic Canadian provinces. Similarly skilled care workers in nearby Prince Edward Island, for instance, earn \$10 per hour more than their Nova Scotia colleagues. Beyond wages, workers are fighting for better staff retention, guaranteed hours and safety against burnout, with some workers reporting they are forced to take on multiple jobs just to make ends meet.



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