

Workers Struggles: The Americas

Educators across Colombia hold protest strike; Montreal municipal workers stage three-day walkout

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

Educators across Colombia stage protest strike

On Wednesday April 15, teachers, members of the Colombian Educators' Federation carried out a one-day strike with street protests. At issue is the collapse of medical benefits. Educators cite long delays in obtaining medical appointments, interrupted treatments and crisis in obtaining needed medicines, conditions that affect teachers and their families.

In addition, teachers are demanding wage increases and improved benefits.

Rallies took place in major cities (Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and Bucaramanga) across the country. If their demands are not met, the teachers' union is threatening more strikes and protests.

Protests continue in Argentina against FATE tire layoffs

On Wednesday, April 15, FATE tire workers rallied once more in Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo square, across from Argentina's government house. The protest rally was triggered by the lay-off of 920 workers. Joining the rally were teachers and health workers.

Workers took over the plant 8 weeks ago. Included in their demands is US\$2.2 million in compensation to make up for 4 months of unpaid wages.

The occupation and protest rallies are taking place in the context of massive attacks on the working class by the Javier Milei administration. So far, 20,000 factories, in addition to FATE, have been shut down since Milei took office.

Public health doctors in Honduras carry out work to rule protests

On Saturday and Monday, April 11 and 13, public health doctors carried out work to rule protests, suspending elective surgeries in all public hospitals and clinics, in response to the right-wing Nasry Asfura administration's sacking of 400 doctors and the non-payment of 1,500 salaries in the last three months. The government claims there is a budgetary and health emergency. Doctors argue that behind these policies is a "hidden privatization" of the public health system; indicating the shifting of 5,000 medical procedures to private hospitals and clinics, since the Asfura administration took over on January 27, 2026.

Joining the protests where health workers employed by the health ministry, the Social Security agency and the 911 Emergency System.

The firing of the 400 doctors came on top of the expulsion of 168 Cuban doctors in March, under contract since 2024 from the Honduran public health system, due to the political pressure of the Trump administration.

Fishers sue over contamination of coastal waters in Chile

Three hundred ninety Chilean small-scale fishers from the state of Antofagasta, Chile are suing the transnational BHP copper corporation (headquartered in Australia) over the purposeful poisoning of coastal waters with waste from its Escondida copper mine.

The fishers of shellfish and lobsters, describe the Antofagasta coastal waters as "an invisible cemetery, under the sea."

The environmental disaster is being caused by a pipe that extends hundreds of yards into the sea and waste from the Escondida mine, located 100 miles from the coast, contaminated with sulfuric acid, lead, arsenic and other heavy metals. These byproducts of copper mining are mixed with water that flows in streams down to the sea.

An investigation carried out by legal representatives of the fishers indicated that the BHP and other copper multinationals are now ruling over the environment.

BHP was also involved in Brazil's worst environmental disaster that "killed" several rivers with toxic waste flowing from the site of the Mariana mine, in Minas Gerais, in 2015 and flowed into the

Atlantic Ocean, south of Rio de Janeiro. More recently BHP and other transnational mining firms lobbied on behalf of the Javier Milei administration's new mining law in Argentina, that severely weakens existing restrictions.

Colorado educators strike over unity with staff workers

Striking teachers for Colorado's Sheridan school district marched to the state capitol April 17 on the tenth day of their strike over union representation. The Sheridan Educator Association (SEA) is demanding that bus drivers, food service workers and paraprofessionals be represented by their union under a single contract.

The representation demand comes up against a school district policy that bars teachers and staff from being represented by the same union. The strike has won broad support among the families of students.

The day before the march on the capitol, Colorado's Democratic governor Jared Polis spoke to the SEA and the district's superintendent. Polis told Denver7 news he wants the strike ended without a contract. "[L]et's get everybody back to the classroom and then maybe hash out any disagreements they have over summer..."

Polis, an entrepreneur, previously served as a representative in the US Congress from 2009 to 2019 and ranked as the third wealthiest congressman with an estimated net worth of \$122.6 million.

Illinois State University workers rally to demand higher wages

Striking Illinois State University workers at the institution's Normal, Illinois campus rallied April 16 as their work stoppage entered its second week. The rally by 300 members of AFCSME Local 1110 called for "Fair Wages Now" as a year of negotiations have not been able to resolve salary differences between the two sides.

ISU negotiators have offered a 3.5 percent wage increase and \$600 one-time bonus if workers accept their offer followed by 3 percent wage increases beginning July 1 and reoccurring over the next three years. The union has not revealed its bargaining position, but workers appear to be adamant that management's offer falls far short as workers on the lowest tier receive a mere \$16.60 an hour.

Minnesota county workers strike over wages

Workers for Chisago County, Minnesota, went on strike April 14

over wages and other issues after state-mediated talks failed and a ten-day cooling off period expired. Teamsters Local 320, which represents the 300 striking workers, have been in negotiations since last fall with the county.

The county is offering wage increases of 6.5 percent in each of the next two years. But county negotiators have rejected a 3 percent market adjustment as not necessary. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that county executives are being compensated with double-digit salary increases.

The union is also seeking to "memorialize" healthcare benefits in the contract. The county has responded to the strike by closing the Health and Human Services building in the city of North Branch, which serves 5,000 county residents.

Montreal municipal workers stage 3-day strike

About 5,500 blue collar city workers in Montreal conducted a three-day work stoppage last week to further their struggle for a new contract. The workers are members of the Syndicat des cols bleus regroupés de Montréal which is affiliated to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Workers deemed as part of essential service requirements were kept on the job during the strike action.

The work stoppage followed on from a 24-hour walkout in early February. Workers mobilized into strike action after 50 rounds of negotiations failed to produce a new collective agreement. The last contract expired on December 31, 2024.

The dispute with city management is largely over wages. City officials are offering an 11 per cent increase spread over five years. Workers have pointed out that municipal workers in nearby jurisdictions have recently settled five and six-year deals at around 22 percent. Currently, Montreal workers earn only \$55,000 per year and have watched their purchasing power erode significantly due to inflation over the past two years.



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