

Workers Struggles: The Americas

26 May 2026

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

Mass rally in Argentina to support Bolivian workers

On May 22, hundreds of Argentine and Bolivian workers, students and retirees carried out a mass march through downtown Buenos Aires and rallied at the Bolivian embassy in Buenos Aires in support for the general strike and mobilization of the Bolivian proletariat and peasantry fighting to overthrow President Rodrigo Paz.

The march took place as the Milei administration sends military aid to Bolivia to support the repression of workers and peasants in that country and to break the blockade of roads leading into the Bolivian capital of La Paz.

Two days earlier, on May 20, in Bolivia, peasant leaders gave President Paz a 90-day period to resign and call new elections. Otherwise, there will be a “social upheaval,” in the words of one of the protest leaders.

Brazilian workers demand end to six-day workweek

Workers protested across Brazil on May 23 and 24 demanding that the national legislature approve legislation outlawing the six-day workweek, and instituting a 5-day forty-hour week with no loss in pay. Protests took place in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza, Campinas, Belém, Manaus, Curitiba and Cuiabá.

While there is popular support for the demand, Brazil’s major labor federations have promoted the reduction in the workweek to boost the credibility of the unions and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s Workers Party (PT) among young people and workers. They hope this will translate into electoral gains in October.

The proposal has been repeatedly delayed due to pressure from the right-wing legislators, united in the Centrão wing of parliament, which at one point proposed delaying the reform for ten years, before it is fully implemented. Lula and the unions have no intention to breaking the resistance of the Brazilian oligarchs who are also opposing the proposal, claiming that it “impacts negatively” on workers’ productivity and the profitability of their firms.

Ecuadorian health workers and chronic patients protest budget cuts

On Thursday, May 21, health workers, chronic patients and their relatives rallied at the nation’s government house in downtown Quito, surrounded by a contingent of armed gendarmes, demanding that the Noboa administration respond to their demands for substantial increases in the public health budget. Drastic cuts in the government health budget go hand in hand with big increases in the military and police budgets. Also present at the rally were family members of disappeared victims of government repression.

Kidney patients carried signs that read: “Dialysis is life.” Other signs called for money for health and not for war. “They have the Ecuadorian people on our knees; they have transformed us into beggars,” declared one of the demonstrators, with tears in his eyes.

Students continue protests at University of Puerto Rico

While on May 18 students ended their strike at the University of Puerto Rico’s (UPR) Rio Piedras Campus, students are still on strike at UPR’s second largest campus, in Mayagüez, on the island’s west coast. Strikes and protest marches have been taking place across all 11 UPR campuses, denouncing the arbitrary firing of educators and campus chancellors and demanding student participation in the administration of the UPR, in the context of the budget crisis affecting the entire island.

The strikers, supported by faculty and staff, demand that UPR President Jordán Conde resign for her attacks on education and research. Conde is refusing to meet with the strikers.

Following the establishment of the Fiscal Oversight Board under the Obama administration to address the island’s debt crisis by forcing the population to pay off a \$74 billion fiscal debt, UPR has undergone deep funding cuts, slashing fully half of its government subsidies (\$879 million in 2016 down to \$400 million in 2022).

Cargill locks out Colorado meatpackers

Cargill, the world’s largest agricultural giant, has locked out 1,700 meatpackers at its Fort Morgan, Colorado, beef processing

facility. Cargill halted cattle slaughtering at the facility on April 23 and continued to pay workers, but once members of Teamsters Local 455 rejected the company's final offer, Cargill locked out the workers.

Meatpackers are demanding increased wages, healthcare and improved safety language. Cargill is redirecting its cattle supply to other plants in an effort to break the resistance of workers.

Beef prices have been soaring. But according to analysts, the cattle herds in the United States are the smallest in 75 years. While meat prices are higher, they are insufficient to cover production costs.

Cargill's initial suspension of production was considered a temporary measure. But the lockout and cutoff of pay is seen as a more decisive measure in the direction of a possible shutdown of the Fort Morgan facility.

Cargill had a workforce of 160,000 back in 2024. Profits increased by 44 percent in its most recent financial year and the company paid shareholders a record \$1.5 billion. Net income was \$3.6 billion.

Jefferson Health to closer four pediatric facilities in Philadelphia

Nurses and other healthcare workers rallied outside Jefferson Einstein Philadelphia Hospital May 21 in the wake of a decision to close four pediatric facilities on June 30. Healthcare workers charge the closures will negatively affect continuity of care for mothers and babies in North Philadelphia after births at the larger hospitals.

The closures come as Jefferson Health is negotiating with 1,200 nurses who are members of Einstein Nurses United, an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Health Professionals (PASNAP). Nurses are seeking improved nurse-to-patient staffing levels.

Jefferson Health operates more than 30 hospitals and 700 care sites across across eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey. Its CEO Joseph G. Cacchione's total compensation is approximately \$8.4 million.

Workers rally to demand higher wages at California news station KEYT

Workers for the Central Coast news station KEYT rallied May 21 in Santa Barbara, California, to protest stalled contract talks and press their demands for increased wages, benefits and improved language governing overtime and scheduling. International Cinematographers Guild (ICG), IATSE Local 600 is the union for videographers, producers, multimedia journalists, editors and directors. Workers insist they are unable to survive on the current wages given the cost of living in the areas they cover for KEYT.

Edhat reports, "A full-time role for a bilingual multimedia journalist/weekend sports anchor offered \$37,000 to \$39,000 annually, while a newscast director was offered \$34,500 to \$36,000 per year. Audio/graphics operators were offered rates as low as \$16 per hour, just skirting the minimum wage allowed in California."

KEYT workers unionized in 2024. After more than a year of bargaining the workforce has dropped from 40 to 30 as workers quit because they were unable to afford basic living expenses on their wages.

Workers are demanding a three-dollar an hour wage raise. Management is stubbornly maintaining no wage increase will be forthcoming. A strike authorization has already been approved.

KEYT is owned by the Missouri-based NPG, which operates multiple West Coast TV stations in cities like Santa Maria, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Salinas, Santa Cruz, and Palm Springs.

Nova Scotia long-term care workers' strike continues to expand

A strike by care workers at long-term health facilities is now entering its seventh week. The workers are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). About one hundred more workers at the latest facility to go on strike at the MacGillivray Guest House in Sydney have joined 3,400 other workers already walking picket lines. The extension of the strike to the MacGillivray facility makes 35 long-term care homes that are strikebound. There are at least seven other remaining homes that may soon join the strike once workers there enter a legal strike position.

Workers at all the facilities must maintain "essential service" coverage under onerous anti-strike laws, but a significant portion can legally take strike action. The workers earn poverty wages, with many earning barely above the provincial minimum wage. The employers' associations, bargaining under the austerity umbrella of the Conservative provincial government, are also resisting worker demands for better staff retention, guaranteed hours and safety against burnout.



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