Philippine DHL workers strike against warehouse closure

Dante Pastrana
26 August 2026

More than 430 logistics workers at the DHL Supply Chain warehouse in Muntinlupa City, Metro Manila, are now on the tenth day of an indefinite strike, fighting for their jobs. The walkout on August 17 followed the announcement that the facility would close on August 30–31. The strike is taking place under the shadow of Article 263(g) of the Philippine Labor Code, a provision inherited from the Marcos dictatorship that empowers the government to declare an "Assumption of Jurisdiction," criminalize a strike and issue a mandatory return-to-work order enforced by state police.

Workers are maintaining a continuous picket line at the gates. On August 21, workers briefly staged protests at DHL retail outlets along Timog Avenue in Quezon City and outside the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) central offices. Solidarity protests have taken place at regional logistics hubs in Bulacan, Iloilo, General Santos City, Surigao and Cebu.

The DHL United Workers Union (DUWU), which covers just workers at the Muntinlupa City warehouse, was certified only in May. DHL management immediately moved to destroy it by planning to shut down the facility. When the closure was finally announced in early August, DHL claimed it was an unavoidable consequence of losing its primary contract with Robinsons Supermarket. However, the union exposed this pretext, pointing out that management had previously celebrated a three-year renewal of that contract.

The negotiations that took place from May to August were never good-faith bargaining. It was a stalling tactic, designed to wear down the workforce while the corporate leadership prepared the warehouse for liquidation. Rather than take industrial action and challenge the country's highly restrictive labor laws, the DUWU leadership, working with the SENTRO labor federation and the leftist Akbayan party, spent these months locked in proceedings before the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB).

Under Philippine law, workers are barred from taking immediate industrial action after a successful strike vote. Union leaders attended seven meetings with DHL management, which refused to table any counteroffer. The union demanded better wages and an end to the multi-layered subcontracting and casual labor schemes through which DHL depresses pay and divides the workforce. After the fruitless meetings, a mandatory 30-day "cooling-off" period followed, then a seven-day strike ban.

The delays gave DHL management months to quietly reorganize its regional operations, shifting logistics transactions to its non-unionized provincial mega hubs. By the time the legal requirements were met to launch the strike on August 17, workers were left with a two-week window before the closure deadline.

DHL's Philippine operations are bound up with DHL Summit Solutions, Inc. (DSSI), a domestic logistics joint venture with the Gokongwei Group, one of the country's most powerful conglomerates. DHL Supply Chain holds a lucrative, exclusive contract to manage nationwide distribution for the Gokongwei Group's food giant, Universal Robina Corporation (URC).

There is a direct connection to the Marcos government. Lance Gokongwei, who heads the business empire, sits on President Marcos Jr.'s Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC), a body that allows the country's leading oligarchs to directly draft national economic policy and insulate their operations from labor disruption.

SENTRO and Akbayan are directly responsible for keeping the DHL workers at the Muntinlupa City warehouse tied up in futile negotiations and delay, and keeping them isolated. Rather than exposing the mechanisms of class collaboration, such as the NCMB, and challenging the straitjacket of industrial laws, these organisations fostered the dangerous illusion in the capitalist state as a neutral arbiter.

Akbayan has long functioned as the left flank of the Philippine ruling establishment. Formed out of the break-up of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines in the early 1990s, it has bartered its "progressive" credentials for bureaucratic appointments, most notably holding cabinet positions during the Aquino III administration.

SENTRO's leadership has structurally integrated itself into the state apparatus through its permanent position in the "Leaders Forum"—an institutional partnership established in 2018 that legally binds the federation to the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) to safeguard "industrial peace."

Compounding its treachery, SENTRO actively sought to invoke the DHL international framework agreement on the right to organize, lobbying for intervention from DHL's German corporate headquarters. The framework agreement is nothing but window dressing. Such global protocols are nothing but public relations documents designed by transnational corporations and international union bureaucracies to ensure predictable supply lines.

DHL workers internationally are confronting global restructuring and mass job losses. The DHL Group announced 8,000 layoffs in Germany last year and aggressive cost-cutting worldwide, even as it posted over €6.1 billion ($US7.1 billion) in operating profits in 2025. The Verdi union pushed through a deal cutting real wages at Deutsche Post DHL, while the company proceeded with its mass job destruction.

In the United States, 6,000 DHL workers voted by 96 percent to authorize strike action in March 2026, only to have the Teamsters bureaucracy impose a sellout contract one day before the deadline. In 2023, 1,100 DHL workers struck for 11 days at the Global Superhub at Cincinnati Airport.

In every case, the union apparatus has functioned as the instrument for suppressing the struggle and imposing management's terms. By treating the Muntinlupa closure as a localized violation of the Labor Code, SENTRO and Akbayan have kept workers tied up in legal knots. This isolates the Filipino workers from their international counterparts, leaving them vulnerable to a transnational monopoly that operates in over 220 countries.

Only by taking matters into their own hands and forming a rank-and-file committee can the striking workers in the Philippines wage a genuine industrial and political campaign to defend their jobs, wages and conditions, by turning to DHL and other workers throughout the Philippines and internationally.