

Mexican professors strike, Argentine teachers to hold one-day national strike

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Mexican professors strike over unpaid salaries, benefits

The General Representative Council (CGR) of the Autonomous University of Morelos State Independent Academics Union (SITAUAE) decided on the night of October 17 to continue the strike that began September 22 over unpaid salaries. A meeting of union reps with university, state and federal officials had been planned for October 17, but was canceled.

The state government owes the university, UAEM, over 140 million pesos (US\$7,250,000). SITAUAE spokespeople say that until there is a tangible guarantee that the funds are in the UAEM coffers they will remain on strike.

Meanwhile, at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (UAZ), 3,000 professors struck on October 18 to demand the payment of benefits of around 42 million pesos (US\$2.2 million) owed since September. In addition to that amount, the UAZ Academic Personnel Syndicate (Spauaz) stated that the university will owe 320 million pesos (US\$16.6 million) for salaries, bonuses and benefits for November and December, but that the general debt at UAZ, including state workers' social security and tax administration service, has grown to 2 billion pesos (US\$103.6 million).

The Spauaz president, Pedro Martínez Arteaga, accused the UAZ rector, Otto Granados Roldán, of turning a blind eye to the crisis and leaving it as a "time bomb" for the incoming government to deal with. Swearing that "we don't want to go on strike and have the government leave us hanging, as it is doing in the University of Morelos," he said, "we have another strategy": bring a criminal complaint against Granados Roldán.

Protest by dismissed Guyanese sugar workers over severance pay

Former sugar workers demonstrated outside the parliament building in Georgetown, Guyana, October 18. The workers, who had been made redundant in 2016 as part of a government-planned phase-out of the state sugar industry, protested delays in severance payments.

At the parliament meeting, Finance Minister Winston Jordan tabled a sum of 2.45 billion Guyanese dollars (US\$11,707,700) to be paid to remaining unpaid workers, claiming that it represented the balance owed to the workers. Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU) and opposition politicians disputed this, claiming that it does not cover workers from one plantation, the Wales estate. They also say that paying the severance amount in two installments violates Guyanese labor law. Seven thousand workers were supposed to have been paid in full by December 29, 2017, but the government has delayed.

Uruguayan bus drivers strike for 24 hours over wage demand

Interdepartmental bus drivers in Uruguay stopped work on October 19 to demand that the government call negotiations over wages. The drivers are members of the Unott transport workers union.

Unott had petitioned the government to hold a "salary council" to negotiate wage improvements, which was rebuffed. The union issued a statement that declared its solidarity with workers for CITA and CUT, two of the nation's main transportation companies. It also denounced recent layoffs that it claims are used "purely and exclusively to distort and affect negotiations."

Argentine bus drivers end partial strike over wages after ten days

After 10 days of partial national strike action between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., members of Argentina's UTA bus drivers union returned to work. During the partial walkout, representatives of UTA and the Argentine Automotor Passenger Transportation Federation (Fatap) held meetings at the Ministry of Labor over a 5.7 percent shift differential that had been agreed on, but was not complied with in some provinces.

UTA claimed success in the agreement and said that Fatap had agreed to across-the-board parity of the 5.7 percent and no retaliation or discounting of wages against striking drivers. Fatap stated that in order to grant the pay raise, it would put

pressure on municipal governments to raise fares and continue subsidies.

Argentine teachers to hold one-day strike over education budget

Teachers in Argentina will hold a 24-hour strike and mobilization on October 24 to press for a larger education budget in 2019. The strike was called by the Ctera teachers federation and also has the support of the Sadop private school teachers union.

The emphasis of the one-day walkout will be on the upcoming debate in the national congress over the education budget proposed by the administration of Mauricio Macri. A Sadop communiqué declared the strike call was a repudiation of the “adjustment model that affects health, education and work in Argentina.” That model is connected to the demands of the International Monetary Fund for cuts in social services in return for the loan that it agreed to with the Macri government.

“The budget sent by the government marks the cutting of the funds destined to education and culture, since in real terms, it is 10 percent less than that of 2018.” The statement further demanded “the urgent convening of federal education parity talks to resolve the salary situation,” the putting into place of the National Plan of Teacher Training, improvement of socio-educational programs and “the immediate convening of the Negotiating Commission of Private Education that the Executive refuses to call.”

Chilean bus drivers strike to demand better working conditions

Drivers for the Chilean public transportation company SUBUS, which operates 56 routes in the Santiago area, began an indefinite strike October 16 to demand improvements in their working conditions. Three unions represent over 1,200 striking workers, who are demanding wage raises as well.

The company and the Labor Minister have reacted to the walkout by bringing in scabs and accusing the striking workers of vandalism. A union official told reporters, “We were just beginning the meeting, and finally we touched on some points of the collective negotiation, but then the company began to verbally assault us, [saying] that we were delinquents and vandals, so that in those conditions we can’t continue negotiations, thus lamentably we can’t continue the meeting.”

Kentucky workers strike cement supplier

Some 50 workers at Allied Ready Mix in Butchertown, Kentucky have been on strike since October 8 over company demands for cuts in wages and vacation time, along with increases in healthcare costs. Members of Teamsters Local 89, representing cement truck drivers, loaders, dispatchers and mechanics, are opposed in particular to a 5 percent hike in healthcare premiums bringing the overall portion of workers’ costs to 25 percent.

“This company wants to teach and preach that we’re all a family, that we’re all about taking care of each other.” striker Jonathan James told WHAS-TV. “It’s bull crap.” Another worker told the *Louisville Courier Journal* that workers put in “ungodly hours,” involving rotating shifts.

In 2012, Allied Ready Mix management filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy and with the cooperation of the Teamsters imposed cuts in wages and benefits to help the company recover.

Nurses strike in northern Ontario

Public health nurses at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit went on strike October 16 after rejecting the employer’s final offer in mediated talks that concluded last Monday.

The 58 nurses affected, members of the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA), have been working without a contract for nearly two years. Union negotiators cite wages and staffing levels as the main issues in dispute. The union wants to bring rates in line with other public health nurses in Ontario, saying their members are the lowest paid in the province.

Public health officials say that some services have been suspended or delayed as a result of the strike, which they say cannot be resolved through arbitration due to existing labor laws.

BC steelworkers start rotating strikes

After having been given legal notice that they are in a legal strike position as of October 3 the United Steelworkers union (USW) began the first of a series of rotating strikes last week at facilities of the Council of Northern Interior Forest Industry Relations (CONIFER), in northern British Columbia.

Calling it “step two” of their job actions following an overtime ban for their 1,500 members earlier in the month, union leaders announced that there is “no intention to strike at this time.” USW negotiators have nevertheless said that CONIFER continues to demand deep concessions in a new deal on a range of issues including overtime work, holidays, and health and welfare payments.

Their last contract expired in June of this year after which over 90 percent of members voted in favor of strike action.

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