

Mexican teachers protest while DHL and Amazon pilots protest stalled talks

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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Mexican teachers strike for 24 hours over education reform

Teachers in a number of cities and towns in Chiapas, Mexico held a 24-hour strike April 10 to protest the education reforms that have continued under the administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, aka AMLO. In some cities the striking educators mounted barricades and marched.

The limited strike was called by the CNTE teachers union federation, which pled for an audience with AMLO, promoting the notion that he can be convinced to change the anti-teacher course that he inherited from his predecessor Enrique Peña Nieto and has continued.

In particular, according to an Excelsior report, the CNTE stated that “since the beginning of the new administration teachers have been subjected to a new normative framework and that obliges them to take to the streets to demand the annulment” of the attacks on the teachers.

The CNTE “has begun to analyze a statewide strike in May,” the report concluded.

Antigua and Barbuda: Airline workers take pay cut; company and shareholders want more

Leeward Islands Air Transport (LIAT), an airline based in Antigua, recently pried a six percent pay cut from pilots and other airline workers. In March, LIAT management had told the pilots and their union, the Leeward Islands Airline Pilots Association, that it could not afford to pay them their current wage, and that it needed to cut pay by 10 percent to keep operating.

In meetings with management, the airline workers unions “agreed to a six percent salary cut, pending further deliberations with their members,” according to an antiguanewsroom.com report. The pilots agreed to a six percent cut, although with reservations about LIAT’s ability to dig itself out. They also agreed to LIAT’s suspension of their pension contribution.

It was not enough for shareholders, who demanded even more cuts in an internal document. “The document said that the shareholders are ‘considering additional measures to address the financial challenges of the airline and that it would continue to update staff on discussions and the proposed measures that will be agreed upon’,” the report said.

It is not known what the unions’ next step will be, and according to the report, “Efforts to get an official comment from the airline have so far proven futile.”

Paraguayan hospital clinic workers protest over pay, categorization and other demands

On April 11, a group of workers for Paraguay’s Clinics Hospital

held a demonstration in front of the Treasury Ministry in Asunción. The protesters called for a meeting with the minister as well as with the president to put forward their demands.

Among the demands are an increase in payment for night work for over 2,000 workers and the recategorization of over 1,000. They also called for the 2,000 workers with academic training to be paid a salary corresponding to their titles.

Another major demand was the raising of the national budget for hospitals and clinics. The protesters expressed fears that without the budgetary increase, not only basic services but operations like liver transplants will be reduced or terminated.

The protesters warned of more extreme measures if there is no increase to the national health care budget.

Argentine state workers continue protests over pay, firings

For the second week in a row, members of Argentina’s Association of State Workers (ATE) held a protest in Buenos Aires April 11 against the policies of the government of Mauricio Macri. As in the previous week’s action, which was called by the General Confederation of Labor and included a 24-hour strike a march and an encampment in front of the Social Development Ministry, they were joined by various social activist groups.

The demands included reopening of talks with the government, raises that keep pace with inflation, and an end to firings and layoffs. This time, the ATE strike was called for 48 hours.

In the morning, members of social activist groups congregated at the headquarters of the ANSES social insurance agency to demand the restitution of discontinued social programs and “social salaries” for the poor. The planned encampment at the Ministry of Health and Social Development, which was broken up by police the week before, was called off at 8:00 pm.

Taxi drivers in Argentina protest Uber, Cabify, Lyft

Taxi drivers from four cities—Buenos Aires, La Plata, Mar del Plata and San Isidro—demonstrated in downtown Buenos Aires April 11 to voice their opposition to the government’s lax approach to ride-hailing services like Uber, Cabify and Lyft. Starting from various points in the capital, they converged on the Casa Rosada, the office and home of President Mauricio Macri, where they delivered a document with demands.

Taxi services have suffered a 40-50 percent drop in business in the three years since Uber et al. were approved, according to the Capital Taxi Drivers Association. The cabbies complain that since the nominally independent drivers of those services are not subject to the

same regulatory and legal requirements as they are, they constitute unfair competition. They also claim that the lack of training of the app-based drivers, required for cabbies, increases the likelihood of accidents.

Although the government has responded to some of the cabbies' complaints with more stringent regulations for the services, the taxi drivers accuse the government of lax or nonexistent enforcement.

National strike, protests by Chilean workers against government policies

Santiago, Valparaíso, Antofagasta and other Chilean cities were the scenes of a nationwide strike and other mobilizations on April 11. The "Second National Active Strike" was called by the Unitary Confederation of Workers (CUT) against the anti-worker policies of Sebastián Piñera, who returned to power in December 2017.

The primary issues around which the strike, marches, community kitchens and cultural events were called were: the rising cost of health insurance, wage stagnation, firings and layoffs, pensions, housing and education.

Air-cargo pilots protest stalled contract talks with Amazon and DHL

Pilots who fly air-cargo jets for DHL and Amazon Prime Air held a protest April 11 outside Amazon's offices in Florence, Kentucky to raise their demands for higher wages, rules to combat fatigue and stalled contract talks with the Teamsters' Airline Professionals Association.

Mike Griffith, a 747 pilot and the union's communication director, said that pilots have already voted to strike if their issues are not dealt with. But the union will only proceed with strike action if permitted by the National Mediation Board. "There will be no wildcat strike," said Griffiths.

The pilots are direct employees of three air-cargo companies—Atlas Air, Southern Air and ABX Air—who are contracted by DHL and Amazon.

The protest took place near the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport where Amazon is due to begin construction on its CVG facility, which will sprawl over 920 acres, house its 3-million square foot e-commerce processing center and have room to park 100 air-cargo planes. The \$1.4 billion project dwarfs the airport's previous \$630 million expansion for Delta Air Lines back in 1993.

Global auto parts-makers in Alabama to lay off 300 workers

Three global automotive suppliers in west Alabama are laying off over 300 workers according to state officials. The announcement was made by the state's Department of Commerce under a requirement specified by the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, which requires two months advance notification to workers and their families.

Faurecia Seating in Cottdale will lay off 118 of its 600 workers on May 31. It previously laid off 138 workers in 2015. The company is based out of France with about 350 production and research and development facilities in 34 countries. Half of the production facilities operate on a just-in-time production principle and provide automotive interior systems a number of major auto manufacturers.

A second company, Eberspächer in Northport, is slated to discharge 127 of its 264 workers starting on June 7. The Eberspächer Group is based in Germany and operates 80 plants in 29 countries and produces heaters, air-conditioning and electronics for automobiles.

The Northport plant produced exhaust systems for Mercedes.

The third firm, Inteva Products, will lay off 56 of its 305 workers on June 5 from its Cottdale plant. Inteva's global headquarters is in Troy, Michigan and operates 46 facilities on 5 continents.

Niagara falls restaurant workers strike

Workers employed by the Rainforest Café in Niagara Falls, Ontario went on strike last week in their bid to win a first contract under the Workers United union after voting overwhelmingly against the employers' final offer the week before.

The 95 workers affected are mostly women who are paid minimum wage as servers, bartenders and hostesses. When the provincial minimum wage was raised to \$14 an hour last year, the company began clawing back the hike from workers' tips, at which point they decided to join a union. The Rainforest Café is owned by Canadian Niagara Hotels, which owns a number of hotels and businesses in the region.

Quebec nurses stage job action

Nurses across the province of Quebec instituted a one-day overtime ban last week as part of a campaign by their union, the Fédération Interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ) against forced overtime, which they say has become a chronic crisis.

The FIQ has 76,000 members in the province and say they are prepared to fight if any face sanctions resulting from what they are calling an overtime strike. This is the first of what union leaders say could be a series of such actions that is supported by a number of other health care unions in Quebec.

This action comes five months after the CAQ came to power on a pledge to end mandatory overtime and who now predict that the situation should improve by the end of the year.

Quebec school bus drivers strike

Drivers in three Quebec school boards in the Eastern Townships, east of Montreal, are scheduled to go on strike this week against multinational transportation giant Transdev.

The two unions affected by the strike are affiliated with the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN). Union negotiators say that it is becoming difficult to retain workers at existing wages and that they are only asking for a wage increase that will bring them in line with other drivers in the region who are making as much as \$3 an hour more.

The union says the strike by approximately 125 drivers is only scheduled to last six days but it is not clear if or when bargaining will resume.

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