

Brazilian delivery workers strike in defense of their lives

By Tomas Castanheira
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On Thursday, delivery workers at the delivery app Loggi entered their third day on strike against the terrible conditions of work and low payments, which have been aggravated since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. The strike was initiated in Rio de Janeiro, fueled by the anger against the death of a young delivery worker, Thiago Coelho, who suffered a motorcycle accident on Tuesday.

On the first day of the strike, workers closed four Loggi offices in Rio de Janeiro and raised a number of demands, which include increasing the value of deliveries and ending bans of delivery workers, and called on their colleagues all over Brazil to join them.

Throughout Tuesday, the workers also held two protests over the death of Thiago Coelho, blocking roads in Niterói, the municipality of Rio de Janeiro where the youth suffered the accident.

The next day, the strike spread to other parts of Rio de Janeiro and reached the state of São Paulo. The workers held new demonstrations, honking their motorcycle horns in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. They blocked tracks of the Red and Yellow transit lines as well as Barra Street, the busiest avenue in the city.

The workers denounced Loggi's attempts to break the strike, offering high rates for scabs, and threatening to prosecute the strikers and ban them from the app. Workers responded by stepping up the movement.

In a video, a strike leader speaks to his colleagues: “The strike is also to unblock everyone who was banned for [from the app] and because of the strike as well. Until they are unblocked, we are going to walk out every day... It reached already São Paulo and Rio. Soon the whole Brazil will be here, let’s get everyone together! I’m not afraid, and you shouldn’t be either. Everybody sticks together, if nobody works at Loggi, there’s nothing they can do. Either they raise the pay,

or nobody works.”

In an interview with *GI*, the same worker states that the company imposes unsafe working conditions, from the overload of packages that do not fit into motorcycle trunks to the lack of protective equipment against the coronavirus. “Look at the hand sanitizer they gave us for the whole month, this is not even enough for a week. And only one mask.”

Loggi is a Brazilian startup on the rise in the delivery business, working in partnerships with transnational corporations such as Rappi and Ifood and in direct competition “with a mix of traditional companies like the post office, Jadilog, Total Express, from whom we want to win every day,” CEO Fabien Mendez said. Last June, Loggi received an investment of US\$150 million from international funds such as the Japanese conglomerate Softbank, and reached a market value of over US\$1 billion, becoming a national “unicorn” company—a model of success.

This voracious competition for markets is based on cheapening the labor costs of delivery services. Loggi and other corporations saw the coronavirus pandemic as a unique opportunity to deepen the exploitation of their workers. The constant bans and reduction of delivery payments were the employers’ response to the gigantic increase of workers signing up to work, in the wake of unemployment in Brazil and around the world since the beginning of the pandemic.

Delivery workers at these applications have been carrying out strikes and protests in Brazil since April, connected to delivery workers’ strikes around the world, in countries like Spain, Ecuador and Argentina. Last Sunday, delivery workers attended the protests around Brazil against police violence, racism and the administration of the fascistic Jair Bolsonaro, joining the international demonstrations in response to the

murder of George Floyd.

The delivery workers' movement is part of a wave of strikes by the Brazilian and international working class that marks a new chapter in the history of class struggle. The statement made this week by a delivery worker on strike, that "businessmen are making too much money while we are suffering on the streets," expresses the feeling of broad layers of the global working class.

Brazilian workers must appeal to their colleagues around the world for a unified movement against the exploitation by the gigantic transnational corporations and for a political response to the destruction of workers' lives prompted by capitalism in all countries.

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