

GM Mexico fires another Silao worker backing US strike and shuts down the plant

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As the national strike by 49,000 workers at General Motors in the United States enters its third week, the company has continued firing workers at its Silao Complex in Mexico for mobilizing support in the plant for a joint struggle with their American and international brothers and sisters.

On Tuesday morning, without any explanation by management, the US-based automaker fired Mauricio Negrete Pérez, who bravely refused to sign his dismissal and rejected the severance package. “We are still fighting,” he told the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter*. “I’ve worked for 21 years at the plant, in the maintenance area of the 6-speed transmissions plant.”

Negrete is one of the workers who took the initiative several years ago to organize a group of workers—now known as “Generating Movement”—to oppose and leave the pro-company trade union at the plant, which belongs to the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). Since reading on the *Autoworker Newsletter* in early September about the corruption scandal of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the US and the contract expiration for American autoworkers, he and Israel Cervantes, who was fired in late August, led efforts to mobilize workers in the plant in support of a potential strike in the United States.

Since September 10, he was eagerly asking the WSWs if he could invite his coworkers in the September 12 online conference with US workers, “so that you can interact with my coworkers here working live from the plant.” On September 15, about 35 workers in the group held an assembly in which they voted on steps to take to leave the CTM and to actively resist speedups and overtime that GM would use to undermine the effect of the US strike.

The Silao Complex assembles transmissions, engines and the highly profitable pickups GMC Sierra and Chevrolet Silverado, which are also assembled at Fort Wayne, Indiana and Flint, Michigan. The US strike, which began in the United States on September 16, has led to intermittent shutdowns at the transmissions and engine areas at Silao, as well as to furloughs at assembly and auto parts plants across

Canada and Mexico.

During the weekend, GM announced furloughs at all areas at the Silao Complex for two days this week with 55 percent pay; however, this was extended on Tuesday to include a continuous shutdown for all 6,000 workers at the plant throughout the week.

The change has not been explained by the company, but the fact that Silao is the only one of the four GM plants in Mexico shut down and the only one in which workers have taken actions in support of the US strike suggests that fears of a simmering rebellion are being taken into consideration. On Tuesday, there was also a power outage at the plant. Nonetheless, the firings as well as the shutdown further demonstrate the common fate of workers across the border and the international character of the working class.

While GM has sought to compensate for lost production in the United States, the actions of support by Silao workers and the lack of parts have greatly weakened the company. Philippe Houchois, an analyst at Jefferies, a Wall Street financial group, told *The Detroit News* Tuesday, “Even assuming a prompt return to production, tight capacity in key segments suggests GM may not recoup all production [for 2019].”

These developments strengthen the position of GM and all autoworkers across North America and beyond to advance their demands, if they can break free of the strangleholds of the trade unions determined to suffocate and sell out their struggle. The United Auto Workers in the US, Unifor in Canada, the Mexican unions, and the KMWU in South Korea, where GM workers have carried out several strikes in the past weeks, have kept members in the dark about the Silao firings and are doing everything possible to block a genuinely united struggle under an international strategy.

Negrete had participated in the September 19 online conference with US autoworkers organized by the WSWs, during which the militant group in Silao called for a joint international struggle against GM and for strikers to demand the reinstallation of victimized workers in Mexico.

On September 20, **Carlos Marquez**, with eight-and-a-half

years at the plant; **Fernando Moreno Moya**, 23 years; **Arturo Martínez Fernández**, 23 years; **Juan Carlos Mendoza**, 25 years; and **Ramón Rodríguez**, 23 years, were fired. On Wednesday, September 25, GM fired **Javier Martínez Mosqueda**, who had worked 24 years at the plant. In the previous weeks, the company had fired **Israel Cervantes**, with 13 years working for GM and **Pedro Masías**, 15 years, for helping organize this group of militant workers opposed to the pro-company union.

With **Mauricio Negrete Pérez**, the total of workers in the militant group fired shortly before or after the beginning of the strike in the US has increased to nine. On September 21, he told the *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* that he had refused to work overtime as demanded by his supervisor, who filed a “correction warning.” Negrete noted, “I will not sign anything and will continue whatever the consequences. We are still fighting.”

Finally, last Wednesday, his coworkers told him he would be fired this week. His response was to appeal even more fervently to workers internationally, sending a message to the September 26 online call, which included participants from the US, Canada, Brazil, India, and Mexico. “I have the noose around my neck, as we say commonly in Mexico,” he said. “I’m appealing to you to come to our aid to stop these firings here in Mexico... There is no turning back now.”

Many more workers at Silao have been singled out, harassed and fired by GM in recent weeks for speaking out or having suffered workplace injuries, as the automaker was preparing for speedups and the effects of the strike in the United States. Several of these workers have also appealed to their brothers and sisters in the US for support and a joint struggle as the way forward in fighting for their jobs and social rights.

On Sunday, Pilar de la Luz Torres Rosales sent the following appeal to GM strikers in the United States, explaining that she was fired on September 13, a week after returning from a medical leave due to a shoulder injury that occurred at the plant, with management citing “a restructuring and refurbishments in the plant.” She explained: “The union is supposed to be there for employees, but it’s not. I join you in your strike, fellow GM workers, to fight together and in support of each other against unjustified firings. Let’s do this through an independent workers’ commission and not through the same unions.”

Since firings began in Silao, autoworkers in the United States have expressed great respect for their brave stance and demanded their reinstatement.

On Tuesday, a striking 20-year veteran at the GM Toledo transmission plant told the *Autoworker Newsletter* she was “inspired” to hear that workers in Korea and Mexico were

supporting their strike. “I am impressed and heartfelt with the support we are receiving throughout the world. It is amazing,” she added.

A Fiat Chrysler worker in Toledo said to the *Autoworker Newsletter*: “There has to be a united front. I send my support. I empathize with what they are going through. A lot of people don’t understand. They are sacrificing a lot for the greater good. The UAW and management use the threat of sending jobs to Mexico as a scare tactic. I don’t blame the Mexican workers. The companies are doing it. It is capitalism at its worst. It is all about profit.”

Workers in Silao had already begun organizing rank-and-file networks in the plant to communicate and coordinate steps to build the “Generating Movement” group. These important steps need to be consciously advanced in opposition to efforts by state and pseudo-left organizations seeking to upend their independent and democratic initiative through fostering illusions in the ability to “reform” or “pressure” the traditional or “independent” unions and the government. The aim of these efforts is to support the trade union bureaucracies and uphold their role as enforcers of the workplace dictatorship by management.

To advance their struggle against the CTM, UAW and GM, workers in Mexico need to expand and consolidate their organizations as rank-and-file committees, grouping all workers in the factory under a democratically elected leadership of the most trusted and militant workers. This will only strengthen their appeals to workers internationally by setting the example for GM strikers and all other workers to follow and build a network of rank-and-file committees for the struggle against GM from the hands of the nationalist and pro-capitalist unions.



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