

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

16 October 2023

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

## Peruvian health workers strike

Twenty-two thousand Peruvian health workers, members of the EsSalud Federation, went on strike on October 10. The workers' demands include the payment of a 5,500 soles peruanos (US\$1,443) annual bonus owed to them by the Peruvian government of President Dina Boluarte. The strikers accuse the Peruvian government of carrying out policies hostile to the working class.

Strike leaders also said that the government has sacked 11,000 workers following the ending of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency measures. The strikers are demanding that all those workers be properly and immediately compensated as required by Peruvian unemployment legislation and that those that are retiring also be compensated in a timely manner. None of these measures is currently taking place.

## Dock truckers in Ecuador demand protection

On October 12, a group of port truck drivers carried out a protest strike, blocking the entrance of the Port of Guayaquil to demand protection against a constant wave of robbery and extortions.

The truck drivers describe being assaulted on the road and being charged \$20 by a criminal gang every time they enter the port.

The truckers are threatening to widen their protests to other ports.

## Guatemala: popular protests paralyze shipping

The Guatemalan Shippers Association declared that, as a result of nine days of protests and road blockages, Guatemala's Pacific Ports are unable to continue operations, having reached their storage limit of containers, full and empty. Fuel storage facilities are also paralyzed in ports along the Caribbean Sea. As a result, ships are being turned away and tourism is also being affected.

Protest demonstrations in Guatemala began on October 2, demanding the resignation of Attorney General Consuelo Porras Argueta, who is accused of attempting to tamper with elections earlier this year.

The demonstrators have vowed to continue their protest until Porras' resignation. Protests are blocking 120 roads, including 11 in Guatemala City.

## Farmers and peasants protest in Mexico's Chiapas state

On Friday, October 13, over 4,000 farmers and peasants marched and rallied in the city of Altamirano, in Chiapas state, demanding the return of 20 of their leaders, kidnapped by an armed gang on October 10. The protesters denounced the impact of homicides, kidnappings, extortion and forced displacements on their communities carried out by paramilitary squads, who have singled out supporters of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).

The protesters also denounced the corruption and lack of concern of provincial authorities. The latest kidnapping took place as 100 farmers were returning from the state capital, Tuxtla Gutierrez, where they had presented their grievances to state authorities. The group was intercepted by armed men in military clothing.

## Brazilian oil terminal employees strike in defense of contingent workers

Full and part-time gig workers went on strike on October

13 at the Baía de Guanabara storage and transfer center in Rio de Janeiro. On October 11, workers rallied at the terminal over the firing of two part-time workers. They have since raised additional demands.

The workers' demand include equal rights and equal pay and benefits for part- and full-time workers. In addition, the strikers demand safer working conditions, to avoid motor boat accidents and accidents in the elevators that lift them onto the ships and storage tanks.

The strikers accuse their employer, SINDIPETRO-RJ, of increasing the number of contingent workers at the terminal. No time limit has been set for the strike.

### **Job cuts to hit staff at University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh campus**

Layoff notices were slated to go out this week to staff members at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh as the administration confronts a nearly \$18 million budget shortfall. In all, some 200 positions are to be eliminated from UW-Oshkosh—the state's third largest campus—through layoffs, early retirements and by not renewing short-term contracts.

Some 150 staff members staged a walkout October 3 to protest the decision to ax jobs. Michelle Kuhl, a professor in the history department, told the rally, "This system has been under-funded for years at the top from the government ... This is a jewel in the crown of Wisconsin. It was a great university system and it has been systematically hacked away."

Some believe the actual number of job losses will be closer to 300, with 215 positions eliminated and another 73 accepting early retirements. In addition, most staff members who are not laid off will suffer a two-week furlough.

Besides government cuts and restructuring, student enrollment has dropped by perhaps 1,000 in the last five years or so. The pandemic, rising inflation combined with tuition freezes all contributed to the current shortfall.

Staff and faculty anger has also been directed at the growth of high-paid administrators. These numbers increased at UW-Oshkosh from 72 in 2013 to 122 10 years later.

### **Philadelphia transit workers grant strike authorization as talks stall**

Philadelphia transit workers voted unanimously to authorize a strike after the union declared significant progress has not been achieved. Some 1,000 workers out of the 5,000 members of Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local 234 took part in the vote with the current two-year contract scheduled to expire October 31.

While contract details are not available, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has cited a budget shortfall as it negotiates with the TWU. The union indicates that pay has fallen behind inflation and the system is plagued with staffing shortages which has led to mandatory overtime and contributed to safety concerns.

The TWU also says it is seeking increased pay for low seniority workers and work rule changes to reduce unpredictable schedules.

SEPTA is also in contract talks with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, Division 71, which represents Regional Rail engineers, and Local 61 of the International Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Union (SMART) that represents conductors on the commuter-rail system.

### **100 grocery workers strike Sobeys Toronto warehouse**

Workers at a key Sobeys distribution center in the north Toronto suburb of Vaughn began a strike this past weekend in pursuit of a significant wage increase and protections against the company's attempts to weaken job security provisions. The low-wage workers are members of the Teamsters union.

Sobeys is the second-largest grocery chain in Canada, second only to Loblaw. The highly automated distribution center is the company's largest in the country. It supplies up to 150 retail stores throughout the Greater Toronto Area and beyond. As well as presenting what the union termed a "lowball offer" on wages, management is attempting to subcontract work out to non-union third-party employers.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**