

# Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

## Latin America

Teachers and health workers in Argentina's northeastern Misiones Province, in struggle since April 18, mobilized last week in a province-wide protest-strike, with marches and rallies across the province. Municipal hospitals remain open only for emergencies and urgent care; private clinics are closed. The strikers are demanding a 100 percent wage increase.

On Thursday, May 16, scores of protesting teachers in Posadas—Misiones' capital city—rallied at the provincial legislature, overcame police barricades and occupied the building, forcing legislators to flee through side and back doors.

Teachers and health workers are also blocking the main highway that links the province with Buenos Aires. A contingent of strikers is currently travelling south into Buenos Aires proper.

Police sent to repress them are in some cases supporting their struggle. On May 17, also demanding higher wages, Posadas police occupied the offices of the Radioelectric Command (Comando Radioeléctrico). The occupation was still ongoing as of Sunday.

May 15—Mexican Teachers Day—striking teachers demanding wage increases to make up for years of price increases marched and rallied in cities across Mexico demanding that the administration of President Lopez Obrador respond to their wage demands and increase the education budget. In Mexico City, the strikers set up encampments.

That morning, in an attempt to defuse the situation, while teachers were marching over to Mexico's government house, Lopez Obrador offered a 10 percent wage increase, claiming that teachers already make enough money. Government authorities erected barricades, forcing the strikers to rally in the city's central square.

The teachers are demanding a 100 percent increase plus budget increases to restore dilapidated schools, provide uniforms, utensils, food and laptops for all students.

## United States

Workers at Hyatt's Tempe Mission Palms hotel in Tempe, Arizona, returned to the picket line May 8 to demand increased wages, better healthcare, pensions and "fair and human workloads." Members of Unite Here Local 11 have been without a contract since June 2023 and have carried out previous pickets to bring Hyatt to the bargaining table.

In February, workers struck to protest management intimidation, including the suspension of David Borg, a worker who confronted a supervisor for her harassment of workers. He was escorted from the supervisor's office by a security guard. The hotel also called police on him. Borg told ABC15, "We shouldn't be treated like machines, we should be treated like human beings with basic respect."

"This is not a thing that has just been happening today or yesterday, it's been happening for years," Magdalena Mares told the *Copper Courier*.

Yusuf Al-Shabazz told the *Phoenix New Times*, "Right now, we don't have a specific number of days that we've set for how long the strike will go."

Some 2,200 registered nurses with the San Francisco Department of Public Health who work at Zuckerberg SF General Hospital, Laguna Honda Hospital and other city clinics voted by a 99.5 percent margin May 17 to grant strike authorization unless the city responds to their demands over unsafe staffing ratios, wages and working conditions. Service Employees International Union Local 1021 claims staffing has resulted in nurses missing 16,000 breaks.

According to the union, private sector nurses have seen some wage increases since the pandemic while the Department of Public Health has stalled on the issue. The result has been a massive turnover among the nursing staff.

"We have been understaffed for a long time," related 16-year veteran nurse Heather Bollinger to *Mission Local*.

“That’s not sustainable. No one wants a third of their colleagues to turn over every 12 weeks, especially in our long-term care facilities.”

The strike authorization clears the way for a walkout when the old contract agreement expires June 30.

Nurses and tech workers at Temple Health’s Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia will commence a five-day strike June 4 after eight months of bargaining has failed to deliver on safe staffing ratios, increased wages and improved healthcare benefits. Nurses voted for strike action by a 94 percent margin. This comes after a strike authorization back in March failed to move hospital management.

The 400 nurses and 135 tech workers first organized in June 2023 with the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) and the rank and file called for joint negotiations, something management has refused.

## Canada

With a labour conciliator unable to move negotiations forward between the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113 and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the union has requested the Ontario Ministry of Labour issue a “no-board report.” The 12,000 mechanics, maintenance workers and subway and bus drivers would then enter a legal strike position 17 days after the report is issued.

Workers and management remain far apart on issues around wages, benefits, job security and working conditions.

The looming strike action at the TTC would be the first since the right to strike was stripped from TTC workers in 2011 by the provincial Liberal government just as workers were moving into strike action at that time. However, in May 2023 the Ontario Superior Court of Justice finally ruled on an action brought both by the ATU and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). The court struck down the anti-strike legislation passed 13 years ago as unconstitutional.

The 2011 anti-strike legislation followed bitter disputes in the TTC. In 1999, a two-day strike across the entire system was sabotaged by the social democrats in the Ontario New Democratic Party and the ATU leadership who, without consulting the strikers, forced workers into binding arbitration. Hard right-wing Ontario Conservative Premier Mike Harris commended NDP leader Howard Hampton for taking the lead in undermining the strike.

In 2008, another strike which had ground the city to a near

standstill ended abruptly when the NDP joined with the other two parties in the legislature to unanimously pass an emergency back-to-work order. These events sparked the blanket anti-strike law that was imposed just before workers could take up the fight again in 2011.

So worried was TTC management (and their allies in the Conservative government) about the implications of last summer’s court ruling that they appealed to the Court to delay the restoration of the right to strike until after this year’s contracts at the TTC were settled. The Court declined. The current Conservative government in Ontario nonetheless retains the weapon of “situational” back-to-work legislation in its arsenal in the present dispute.

About 60 workers, members of Unifor, are entering their third week on strike against Waste Management Canada Corporation (WM) as the company steps up its use of managers and outside contractors to perform the work of the striking union members. The Unifor members work as WM drivers, technicians and mechanics who service commercial businesses in Niagara, Stoney Creek, Hamilton and Brantford.

Workers have pointed out that the unqualified replacement workers are performing their duties by ignoring health and safety regulations and work practices, such as climbing into dangerous trash collection equipment, not locking off dangerous machinery and covering up cameras meant to ensure safe work practices. Workers are striking to end compulsory overtime and other grueling working conditions and for a significant wage increase after years of the erosion of their incomes by inflation.



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