

New York Times workers on 24-hour strike for better newsroom

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Vehicles drive past the New York Times headquarters in New York [File: Lucas Jackson/Reuters]

New York, December 8 (RHC)-- Hundreds of journalists and other employees at The New York Times have begun a 24-hour walkout, the first strike of its kind at the newspaper in more than 40 years.

Newsroom employees and other members of The NewsGuild of New York – the union for news professionals in the United States' media capital – said they were fed up with bargaining that has dragged on since their last contract expired in March 2021.

The union announced last week that more than 1,100 employees would stage a 24-hour work stoppage starting at 12:01am on Thursday [05:01 GMT] unless the two sides reach a contract deal. The NewsGuild tweeted on Thursday morning that workers “are now officially on work stoppage, the first of this scale at the company in 4 decades.”

“It’s never an easy decision to refuse to do work you love, but our members are willing to do what it takes to win a better newsroom for all,” it said. Negotiations took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, but the sides remained far apart on issues including wage increases and remote-work policies.

On Wednesday evening, the union said via Twitter that a deal had not been reached and the walkout was happening. “We were ready to work for as long as it took to reach a fair deal,” it said, “but management walked away from the table with five hours to go.

New York Times spokeswoman Danielle Rhoades Ha said in a statement they were still in negotiations when they were told that the strike was happening. “It is disappointing that they are taking such an extreme action when we are not at an impasse,” she said.

It was unclear how Thursday’s coverage would be affected, but the strike’s supporters include members of the fast-paced live news desk, which covers breaking news for the digital paper. Employees were planning a rally for that afternoon outside the newspaper’s offices near Times Square.

Rhoades Ha told The Associated Press the company has “solid plans in place” to continue producing content, including relying on international reporters and other journalists who are not union members. In a note sent to guild-represented staff on Tuesday night, Deputy Managing Editor Cliff Levy called the planned strike “puzzling” and “an unsettling moment in negotiations over a new contract”.

He said it would be the first strike by the bargaining unit since 1981 and “comes despite intensifying efforts by the company to make progress.” But in a letter signed by more than 1,000 employees, the NewsGuild said management has been “dragging its feet” bargaining for nearly two years and “time is running out to reach a fair contract” by the end of the year.

The NewsGuild also said the company told employees planning to strike they would not get paid for the duration of the walkout. Members were also asked to work extra hours to get work done ahead of the strike, according to the union. The New York Times has seen other, shorter walkouts in recent years, including a half-day protest in August by a new union representing technology workers who claimed unfair labour practices.

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