

International Workers' Day commemorated around the world with marches and demonstrations for better pay and working conditions



Havana, May 1 (RHC)-- Workers and activists around the world marked International Workers' Day with protests Wednesday over the pressure of rising prices and calls for greater labor rights. Pro-Palestinian sentiments were also on display, as protesters stepped up their anger over the U.S.-supported genocide being carried out by Israel in Gaza.

May Day, which falls on May 1st, is observed to celebrate workers' rights. It's also an opportunity to air economic grievances or political demands. "Tax the rich," one banner in Germany read. "Don't touch the eight-hour workday!" another read in Sri Lanka. "I want to live, not survive," read one in France.

In Paris, police fired tear gas as thousands of protesters marched through the French capital, seeking better pay and working conditions. Twenty-nine people were arrested. Pro-Palestinian groups and anti-Olympics activists joined the rally, chanting slogans in support for people in Gaza.

A group of protesters set makeshift Olympic rings on fire to show discontent with the Summer Games that start in less than three months. France's unions have warned of a strike during the Games if the government does not adequately compensate people forced to work during summer holidays.

Government officials have failed to meet with union leaders, said Sophie Binet, the general secretary of the CGT union, one of France's largest. "How do you expect it to go well if the authorities don't respond to our simplest demand?" she said.

In Athens, several thousand protesters joined marches as labor strikes disrupted public transport across Greece. The largest union demands a return to collective bargaining after labor rights were scrapped during the 2010-18 financial crisis.

Pro-Palestinian protesters joined the rallies, waving a giant Palestinian flag as they marched past the Greek parliament. Others displayed banners in support of pro-Palestinian protesting students in the United States.

"We want to express our solidarity with students in the United States, who are facing great repression of their rights and their just demands," said Nikos Mavrokefalos at the march. "We want to send a message that workers say no to exploitation, no to poverty, no to high prices," he added.

In Nigeria, unions criticized government efforts to ease the cost of living and demanded bigger salary increases. Inflation is the highest in 28 years, at over 33%. In South Africa, pro-Palestinian demonstrators joined May Day events. In Kenya, President William Ruto called for an increase in the country's minimum wage.

In Lebanon, pro-Palestinian marchers mingled with workers demanding an end to an economic crisis. "Politicians do not feel the pain of the worker or the economic conditions," said one demonstrator, Abed Tabbaa. In Iraq, protesters demanded better wages, the reopening of closed factories and the end to privatization of certain businesses.

In South Korea's capital, thousands of protesters shouted pro-labor slogans at a rally that organizers said was meant to step up criticism of what they call anti-labor policies pursued by President Yoon Suk Yeol's conservative government.

"In the past two years under the Yoon Suk Yeol government, the lives of our laborers have plunged into despair," Yang Kyung-soo, leader of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, said in a speech. Union members criticized Yoon's recent veto of a bill aimed at limiting companies' rights to seek compensation for damages caused by union strikes. The government also has vowed to sternly deal with illegal strikes.

In Japan, more than 10,000 people gathered in Tokyo, demanding salary increases to set off price increases. Masako Obata, leader of the left-leaning National Confederation of Trade Unions, said dwindling wages have widened income disparities.

In Indonesia, workers demanded protections for migrant workers abroad and a minimum wage raise. They gathered amid a tight police presence, chanting slogans against the new Job Creation Law and loosened outsourcing rules.

In the Philippines, hundreds of workers and left-wing activists marched to demand wage increases and job security amid soaring food and oil prices. Riot police stopped them from getting close to the presidential palace.

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