

Brazil Petrobras workers call indefinite strike beginning Saturday



Brasilia, January 30 (RHC)-- Workers at the Brazilian oil company Petrobras have approved a plan to go on an indefinite strike beginning Saturday, protesting a plan by the state-controlled company to close the Parana Nitrogen Fertilizer plant and fire its 396 workers.

"The current government's aggressive policy of privatization and closure of Petrobras' strategic units impacts oil tankers, with massive layoffs and attacks on agreed rights, and also harms the population," the Oil Workers Federation (FUP) said in a statement.

The federation and its 13 unions said the decision to layoff workers violates the collective labor agreement signed between union representatives and the firm, which prevents the company from promoting mass layoffs without prior negotiation with the union.

"This is not an isolated case of breach of the agreement. Less than three months after signing the ACT, the company's managers continue to repeatedly disrespect what they agreed with union representatives. In addition, they override legislation and the negotiation process itself by imposing unilateral decisions, in spite of the unions' and workers' will," they FUP added.

Oil workers said they had already informed Petrobras about the plan and that despite the strike it has no plans to hurt fuel supplies in the country. Petrobras said the strike was illegal and that it has contingency plans.

The FUP has called several strikes in the past, mostly to protest the company's plans to divest from several areas to reduce costs and cut debt. Oil production or refining operations were hardly affected.

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