

35 Million-Strong Strike Against Temer's Neoliberal Reforms Brings Brazil to a Halt

By [Telesur](#)

Global Research, April 30, 2017

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Amid record levels of unemployment and a terribly unpopular government, unions and citizens from all walks of life are taking part in one of Brazil's biggest ever strikes.

Since early Friday morning, more than 35 million people in Brazil have been taking part in one of biggest general strikes in the country's history against **President Michel Temer's** neoliberal reforms, bringing the country to a standstill.

The strike was largely organized by Unified Workers Central, or CUT, the largest union federation in Latin America, and the Workers Party of Brazil, former President **Dilma Rousseff's** political party.

"Temer does not even want to negotiate," said **Vagner Freitas**, national CUT president.

Freitas estimated that the strikes would break previous records with more than 35 million people participating by leaving their work.

In Brazil's biggest city and economic hub, Sao Paulo, only one metro line was operating, 70 major routes were blocked off as was access to the city's major airport. Before daylight, a number of protesters clashed with police while trying to occupy a vacant building. Police were also seen firing tear gas to disperse protesters and at least 12 people were detained.

Similar scenes were also seen further South in Santos, where police reportedly used tear gas in an attempt to clear roads leading to the city's port. In the city of Goiânia in central Brazil, police were seen violently breaking up protesters, with one man being forcefully grabbed and another shown bleeding.

David Miranda, the first LGBTQ city councilor of Rio de Janeiro, was hit by a car during Friday's protests after setting up traffic cones to block vehicles. The car stopped in front of Miranda and suddenly accelerated, toppling him and another protester. Both demonstrators were not critically hurt.



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Así se ven las calles de Belo Horizonte, capital de Minas Gerais.
bit.ly/2oErbp6 #BrasilEmGreve Foto: Brasil de Fato

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In Rio de Janeiro, the bridge between Rio de Janeiro and its neighboring city of Niterói was jammed tight with traffic for a number of hours in the morning. Large protests were also continuing in the Salvador the capital of the eastern state of Bahia, and in Curitiba in the southern state of Paraná and Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais.



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"No acabó, debe acabar, yo quiero el fin de la Policia Militar", piden los manifestantes.

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In Porto Alegre, police also launched tear gas and smoke from fires lit on the streets billowed into air. Banks, schools and transport were brought to a halt in Florianopolis, Santa Catarina as police surrounding the crowds of protesters moving through the streets.



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Other cities across Latin America's largest country are expected to have a similar fate. People are setting up road blockades, burning tires in the streets, and protesting the unelected government and its neoliberal labor reforms and austerity programs, with many holding signs of "Fora Temer!" (Temer Out!).

In preparation, authorities have already boarded up state buildings in the federal capital of

Brasilia and local Brazilian media is reporting that taxi's and rideshare applications are offering people discounted fares to help keep cities running amid the strikes. In rural areas, locals were seen blocking off streets in protest using tractors.



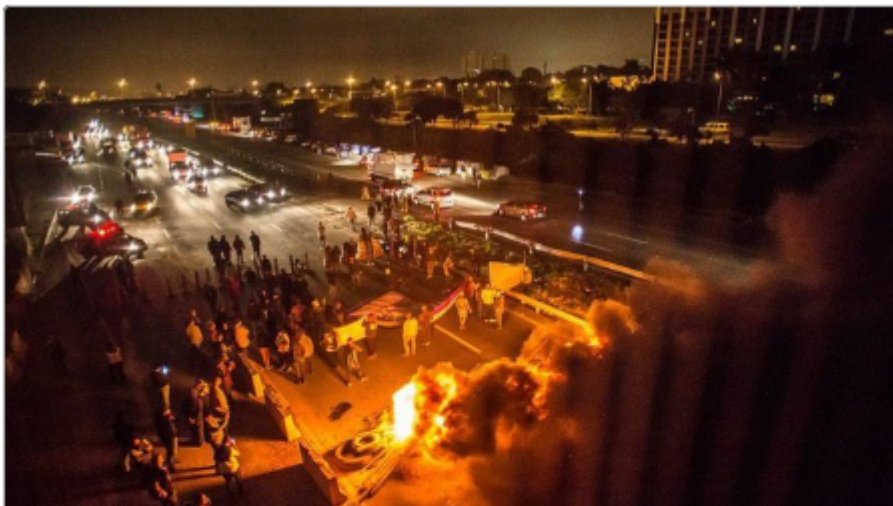
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The streets are filled in Florianopolis as armed police forces surveil the crowds. 📷: @mfox_us #GreveGeralnoBrasil #ForaTemer

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Dozens of other unions, grassroots organizations, teachers, church leaders, civil servants

also threw their support behind the strike.

“It is going to be the biggest strike in the history of Brazil,” said **Paulo Pereira da Silva**, president of trade union Forca Sindical.



“The idea is not making an action, but getting people to the streets and squares, stopping all production and services; transform cities into ghost towns” said **Vera Paoloni**, director of communication of the Single Confederation of Workers, in the state of Para, Vera Paoloni.



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Em Barra Mansa, na região Sul do Rio de Janeiro, o povo está na rua da Matriz em ação pela #GreveGeral. #BrasilEmGreve

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81



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“Reforms of such importance can not be implemented without extensive discussion,” said **Leonardo Steiner**, the auxiliary bishop of Brasilia, in an interview published by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops.

The strike was called immediately after Temer’s administration pushed through a controversial labor reform bill on Wednesday in Brazil’s chamber of deputies.



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Workers gathering in the city center of Fortaleza in Northeast Brazil. 📷: Brasil de Fato #BrasilEmGreve

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The reform would undermine workers’ rights by eliminating payment for their commute from

their contracts, reducing compensation for employer abuse, and most importantly, allowing employers to reduce workers' salaries while increasing their work hours.

The bill, which proposes to end mandatory union dues, must still be approved by the Senate. It was approved by Brazil's lower house by 296 votes to 177.

Temer is also proposing a 20-year freeze on public spending and cuts to pension protections.

The general strike comes amid a dismal disapproval rating for the Temer administration — a staggering 87 percent, according to the latest Ipsos poll. The mass mobilization of workers and civil society also comes on the heels of ongoing protests, such as the five-day encampment of Indigenous peoples and a police union protest, both occurring in front of Brazil’s Congress.

“I invite all of you to participate in the strike, in an orderly fashion without chaos,” **Bishop Flavio Giovanele**, a strike organizer, told Brazilian news site Plus 55.

“Because if we want a peaceful Brazil, we need peaceful protests. But we also must protest steadfastly our position in regards to the pension and labor reform.”



The strikes also come on the back of record unemployment figures, which topped more than 13 million people, adding to the country worst economic recession in history. Temer’s coup-imposed government, however, claims that it had inherited the problem and is working to change the situation

Conservative leaders around the country have condemned the strike and threatened unions and striking workers with fines and wage discounts.

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