

May Day 2009 International Workers' Day National Mobilization for Immigrant Rights

Photos & Essay Reports from around the World



BY: National Immigrant Solidarity Network

<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

Message from National Immigrant Solidarity Network about May Day 2009

National Immigrant Solidarity Network calling for a national day of multi-ethnic unity with youth, labor, peace and justice communities in solidarity with immigrant workers and building new immigrant rights & civil rights movement! Our points of unity are:

- 1) No to anti-immigrant legislation, and the criminalization of the immigrant communities.
- 2) No to militarization of the border.
- 3) No to the immigrant detention and deportation.
- 4) No to the guest worker program.
- 5) No to employer sanction and "no match" letters.
- 6) Yes to a path to legalization without condition for undocumented immigrants NOW.
- 7) Yes to speedy family reunification.
- 8) Yes to civil rights and humane immigration law.
- 9) Yes to labor rights and living wages for all workers.
- 10) Yes to the education and LGBTQ immigrant legislation.

We encourage everyone to actively linking our issues with different struggles: wars in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine & Korea with sweatshops exploitation in Asia as well as in Los Angeles, New York; international arm sales and WTO, FTAA, NAFTA & CAFTA with AIDS, hunger, child labors and child soldier; as well as multinational corporations and economic exploitation with racism and poverty at home—in order we can win the struggle together at this May Day 2009!

Based on the news reports from across the world, there's at least hundred cities and communities across the U.S. had organize their May Day actions to support workers rights and immigrant rights. Globally, there's at least several hundred cities had organized tens of millions of people for march/protest/community events to celebrate the May Day 2009.

While the number of people participated in U.S. on May Day had been declined due to weather, economic reason, factional fights in some cities had created major confusion, and corporate America/government continue their campaign to against celebrating the May Day and exploiting H1N1 Influenza A virus (aka swine flu) "crisis" to scare people participating this year—none-the-less, the numbers of people participated at May Day actions across the global still stay very strong, and at some countries even grown bigger due to the working class angry about the current economic crisis.

We have compiled you a following report from May Day 2009 mobilization across the World.

Always reminder: Think Globally, Act Locally; Injustice Never Sleeps, and People's Struggle Never Ends!

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National Immigrant Solidarity Network
No Immigrant Bashing! Support Immigrant Rights!

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

National Immigrant Solidarity Network (NISN) is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:

<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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Please join our e-mail lists

National Immigrant Solidarity Network daily news listserv (4-5 e-mails per day)

send e-mail to: isn-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

or visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/isn>

The monthly NISN monthly Action Alert! Listserv (2-3 e-mails per month)

go to webpage <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/isn-digest>

Asian American Labor Activism Alert!

send-e-mail to: api-la-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

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New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania areas immigrant workers information and alerts

send e-mail to: nyc-immigrantalert-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

or visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/nyc-immigrantalert>

US-Mexico Border Information/Alert!

send e-mail to: Border01-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

or visit: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Border01/>

Virginia state-wide immigrant organizing e-mail list

send- e-mail to: va-immigrantrights-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

or visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/va-immigrantrights>

Chicago/Midwest/Great Lake Region Immigrant List

send e-mail to: chicago-immigrantrights@lists.riseup.net

or visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/chicago-immigrantrights>

Immigrant Detention & Deportation Alert!

visit: <https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/isn-immigrantdetention>

send e-mail to: isn-immigrantdetention-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

1. United States

May Day 2009: Tens of Thousands Rally for Immigrant Rights

Fight Back News Service

On Friday, May 1, tens of thousands marched for immigrant rights in demonstrations across the country. The marches and rallies called for legalization of the undocumented, an end to the raids and deportations and maintaining family unity. Although smaller in the number than in previous years, the marches drew a broad cross-section of the Latino communities, including many families. There were also significant numbers of trade unionists and members of Asian American communities.

Perhaps the largest single march was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where more than 20,000 people came out on May 1. The march was organized by Voces de la Frontera (Voices of the Border), a local immigrant rights group. In addition to a large turnout from the Latino community with Mexican and American flags, the march included union workers and students from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapter carried a banner reading "Solidarity with all immigrants - No human being is illegal!"

In Los Angeles, nearly 10,000 hit the streets on May 1. Although there was not a single unified march as in other cities, each protest drew thousands of Chicanos, Mexicanos and Central Americans. There were also contingents from labor unions, Asian American communities and college campuses. There was a contingent of Salvadorans who support the leftist FMLN, whose candidate was just elected president of El Salvador. Many of the marchers had signs from the Southern California Immigration Coalition, one of the march organizers, reading, "¡Obama, escucha!" (Obama, listen!) that called on the president to stop the ICE raids, legalize the undocumented, oppose a guest worker program and support the right to organize.

The Chicago May 1 march drew more than 5000 despite the rain and a high level of concern about the new H1N1 flu virus. The demonstration was organized by the Centro Sin Fronteras and the March 10th Coalition and led off with a banner calling for legalization. The march included workers from the Republic Windows factory and a large contingent from Teamsters 743. Armando Robles, president of UE local 1110, representing the Republic Windows workers, said "We go out to demand not only immigration reform with full equality for all the immigrants, but we also march for the whole working class."

In the California bay area, there were large marches in Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose. The protesters for immigrant rights had to brave an unusual rain, but were in high spirits. In San Jose, a thousand people chanted "¡Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha!" (Obama, listen, we are here to fight!), while speakers called on the president to live up to promises of immigration reform in the first year. Many of the marchers had signs reading "Crush ICE," referring to the hated Immigration and Custom Enforcement which has been carrying out raids of workplaces and communities to deport the undocumented.

Immigrant rights marches also were held in other large cities such as New York, Washington, D.C., Miami, Houston and Denver as well as in smaller cities and towns.

In Minneapolis, hundreds took part in a march led by the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Coalition. In addition to demands to stop the raids and deportations and for legalization, marchers also called for state drivers licenses to be granted to the undocumented and supported the Employee Free Choice Act or EFCA. Mary Lou Middleton, vice-president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3800 urged everyone to support the EFCA, "So that all workers are protected from exploitation by their employer." The Minneapolis marchers were refused a permit by the city, but they fought for an endorsement from the city council and went ahead with the protest.

In addition to the marchers, thousands more watched and supported the protests. In Minneapolis, Alejandra Flores stepped out of her workplace to watch. "I'm so happy," she said, "I'm sad that I have to be at work and can't join. ¡Viva los inmigrantes!"

Immigrants' Rallies Draw Small Crowds in Flu Scare

By JULIA PRESTON and KIRK SEMPLE
New York Times May 1, 2009

Immigrants turned out for May Day demonstrations across the country in much smaller numbers than last year, with marchers pointing to uneasiness about the flu scare and job worries in the recession to explain why many people stayed home.

Organizers had called for marches and rallies as a show of support for immigration overhaul legislation that President Obama has said he will offer before the end of the year. But in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and New York, among other cities, turnout was sharply lower than expected as immigrants, many of them from Mexico, said they did not feel the time was right for marching in the street.

Mexican immigrants and businesses in the nation have not seen major negative impacts from the rapidly spreading flu epidemic, despite wide publicity that the illness first erupted in Mexico and has spread from there. But in New York, a major annual Cinco de Mayo festival was canceled because of fears of flu contagion.

And Mexicans around the country said the fallout from the swine flu had arrived in more subtle ways, from remarks that struck them as prejudicial, to friends who declined dinner invitations without giving a reason.

In Boston, Jay Severin, a conservative radio talk show host on WTKK-FM who is known for outrageous banter, was suspended indefinitely from his afternoon show after he referred to Mexican immigrants in insulting terms, executives at the station said Friday. In comments about the flu epidemic in recent days, Mr. Severin had called Mexicans "primitives," "leeches," and "criminaliens."

Immigrant advocates had hoped that Friday's rallies would help them build pressure on President Obama to move forward with broad immigration legislation, which would include measures to give legal status to about 12 million illegal immigrants in the country.

But in Chicago, only about 5,000 people came out, a far cry from the estimated 65,000 who turned out a year ago. Some immigrants said that because of the flu, they did not feel it was safe to bring their families to a crowded rally; organizers supplied face masks and hand sanitizer to those who were fearful.

But some participants said the low attendance was also related to disappointment that Mr. Obama has not acted to end a crackdown on illegal immigrants.

"People had hoped to see change sooner with our new president," said Sandra Cajas, an immigrant advocate.

In Los Angeles, there was no big march as in past years, as immigration groups chose to hold several smaller rallies. Police officials said six groups had received permits.

At one rally, with about 1,000 people carrying Mexican flags and wearing T-shirts saying "Legalize America now," the mood was subdued. Dozens of marchers wore face masks as a precaution against the flu.

In one of the more dramatic effects of the epidemic, organizers in New York this week postponed the Festival del Cinco de Mayo in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens, the largest of several events in the city celebrating the Mexican holiday. They cited concerns about flu contagion.

"We think it's very, very high risk to put thousands of people in this situation," said Carmelo Maceda, 49, vice president of Casa Puebla, a Manhattan-based advocacy group for Mexicans and the organizer of the annual festival.

The event draws tens of thousands of spectators a year to see performances by dozens of popular Mexican musical groups. Mr. Maceda noted that some New Yorkers who had contracted swine flu attended schools near the festival site.

Casa Puebla and other sponsors of the event have lost about \$100,000 in advertisements and nonrefundable city permits, plane tickets, and down payments for equipment and hotel rooms, Mr. Maceda said.

Other effects of the swine flu outbreak were less conspicuous. Maria Macaren, 42, an employee at La Bomba Records, a Latino music store in East Harlem, said she was heckled by a passing motorist when she was standing outside the store.

“Someone passed me and yelled, ‘You should have a mask on because you’re Mexican,’ ” she said.

Erika Harrsch, 38, a Mexican artist living in Long Island City, Queens, said she returned last Sunday from a six-week trip to Mexico.

Even though Ms. Harrsch is in perfect health, she said Friday in a telephone interview, “no one wants to see me — I’m totally serious. People don’t say it; they just play busy.”

“In Mexico,” she added, “everyone wants to be near you to help you when you’re sick, but here nobody wants to be with you.

“I’ve never felt so lonely in this country,” she said.

Julia Preston reported from San Diego, and Kirk Semple from New York. Mathew R. Warren and Karina Ioffe contributed reporting from New York, Rebecca Cathcart from Los Angeles, and Karen Ann Cullotta from Chicago.

Los Angeles, CA



In Spite of Hard Times A Festive May Day in Los Angeles

[LA Indymedia] Outdoor public events in the City of Los Angeles have always been unpredictable and the history of May Day events over the years is no exception to this. Early reports of Friday’s May Day events indicate that this year was festive and free of police violence experienced in past years.

There were multiple May Day marches and events this year in the Los Angeles area on Friday. There were also dozens of high school student walkouts in East LA and many local community marches throughout the Southern California region. One Indymedia reporter with one of downtown marches reported a very positive and festive march with a wide diversity of people and a great youth turnout. The crowds cheered as student walkout marches from local high schools joined the main march. Another reporter in Riverside estimates 500 people demonstrated at Riverside City Hall. Local grassroots groups and union locals together with UCR students made up the Riverside demonstration.



New York City, NY

Hundreds rally in New York for immigrants' rights

NEW YORK (Jesse Solomon CNN) -- Hundreds of people converged on New York's Union Square Friday for the May Day Immigration Rally, calling for workers' rights and a path to citizenship for the country's nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants.



New Yorker's support the rights of undocumented workers on Friday at a May Day rally.

The annual event, which began in 2006, was organized by the May 1st Coalition for Workers and Immigrants Rights. Similar rallies were scheduled across the nation in Boston, Massachusetts; Detroit, Michigan; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco in California, and San Antonio, Texas, according to the group's Web site.

Following rally cries from speakers in both English and Spanish, demonstrators braved a rainstorm and marched approximately two miles to New York's Federal Plaza.

Among the participants was Saul Linares, who emigrated from El Salvador six years ago and works at a Long Island factory making equipment for the U.S. Army. Linares is particularly concerned about children who are American citizens, yet whose illegal immigrant parents have been deported. "The children are living alone, sometimes with relatives, at churches or with neighbors," he said.

Teresa Gutierrez, a co-coordinator of the event, blames current government policy for the United States' immigration woes. She said she believes the Clinton administration's landmark 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA -- which was meant to promote cross-border growth between the United States and Mexico -- actually had exploitive effects on the Mexican population.

"Immigrants came because of NAFTA. They don't risk their lives crossing the border because they want to, but because they have to," she said.

A smaller anti-illegal immigration rally assembled across the street, organized by the New Yorkers for Immigration Control and Enforcement. Charles Maron, a New York firefighter and husband of a first generation Pakistani, believes illegal immigrants who commit crimes should be deported. "Someone who comes, teaches their kids the American way, I support that."

Participants in the May Day rally included people from Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. According to Gregory Jesus Luc, who is producing a documentary about the plight of Haitian immigrants, "It's about awareness, letting media and America know that we are immigrants and we are the backbone of this country."



NYC May Day: A Defiant, Determined Festival of International Workers' Solidarity

By Dee Knight

Workers from Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe marched united on Broadway in New York on May Day 2009. Intermittent torrential rains drenched the demonstrators, but could not dampen their spirits.

Thousands gathered and marched, waving colorful flags and holding beautiful banners. A festive air – complete with dancers, musicians and drummers – mixed with a defiant, determined mood: "Aqui estamos, y nos quedamos, y si nos echan, regresamos!" ("We're here, and we're staying, and if they throw us out, we'll be back!")

There was a kickoff rally at Union Square – historic site of many May Day gatherings – and then a march down Broadway to Foley Square, in front of the notorious Federal Building, where many immigrants have experienced abuse and grief and discrimination at the hands of "la migra," formerly known as the INS and now ICE.

At Foley Square, Charles Jenkins of Local 100 Transit Workers Union, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Million Worker March Movement, said "all workers – in unions or not, with papers or not – need to unite. We want to organize all immigrant workers, so everyone can have good jobs and union pay." His remarks were echoed by AFSCME District Council 37 leaders Misbah Uddin and Mike Gimbel, who said "immigrants' rights are workers' rights."

Grassroots organizations of day laborers and street vendors came from Hempstead, Long Island; Queens; the Bronx; Manhattan; Staten Island and Freehold, NJ. Their T-shirts and banners emblazoned the spirit of the day: Esperanza del Barrio (Hope of the Barrio), Vamos Unidos – Vendedores Ambulantes Movilizando y Organizando en Solidaridad (Street Vendors Mobilizing and Organizing in Solidarity), Centro de Derechos Laborales (Center of Workers' Rights), No Raids Committee, and NICE (New Immigrant Community Empowerment).

A NICE representative called for "just and humane immigration reform," adding that she hasn't seen her family in twenty years. A group of Latina students from various New York City community colleges carried a banner saying "We have a dream – pass the DREAM Act now!" This act would allow all students, documented or not, to attend four-year colleges. Tens of thousands of immigrant students now have their dreams of education deferred because of discriminatory laws that hold them back.

The Philippine representation was especially strong, reflecting the impressive organizing efforts of Bayan-USA and the Gabriela Network of New York and New Jersey. Gabriela is a "Philippine-U.S. women's solidarity mass organization." Berna Ellorin, general secretary of Bayan-USA, and co-coordinator of the May Day event, declared that "migration is for survival. We wouldn't leave our home countries if we could find work there, but neoliberalism – also known as imperialism

– has destroyed the economies in our countries. That’s why we come here – legalization for all, and down with imperialism!”

The Al-Awda Palestinian Right to Return Coalition was represented by Dahlia, who showed how the Mexican-American and Palestinian experiences are the same. “Imagine being driven from your home and then forced to build a new home for your oppressor right on top it,” she explained. “Palestinians understand and share the suffering of the Mexican people,” she declared.

Sara Rodriguez and Mike Filippo of the Stella D’Oro strikers in the Bronx both spoke, and won strong applause when they told the crowd the 160 strikers at the bakery “will keep fighting for as long as it takes!” The mostly women immigrants have been on the picket line for eight months, and not one of them as gone back to work, despite intense pressure.

Hector Castillo, of the Bronx Community Coalition, represented Dominican workers. He said, “People ask ‘why organize, if President Obama is giving immigration reform.’ This is a big error,” he said. “We’ll only get legalization if we fight for it.”

Ray LaForest spoke for Haitian workers, and Walter Sinche for the Ecuadorian Alliance. African workers were represented by Fallou Guyere of the Senegalese community, and by Dr. _____ of the Somali association SAFRAD, who made an eloquent appeal against U.S. military and economic aggression in the Horn of Africa. Jei Fong of Break the Chains represented Chinese workers in New York City. Shahid Comrade spoke for the Pakistan-USA Freedom Committee. He demanded an end to the U.S. drone-bomber attacks on his country, and to U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. A Guyanese union leader also spoke.

An Ecuadoran children’s dance troupe stole the show – and everyone’s hearts – with a beautiful dance presentation. One of the children spoke, appealing to President Obama not to deport his parents.

Both Nieves Ayress and Victor Toro represented La Peña del Bronx. Nieves, as rally co-chair, won applause over and over with calls for unity and struggle. Victor Toro, who is currently facing deportation, summarized the key demands of the immigrants’ rights movement: legalization, stop the raids, reunify families, and no conditions or discrimination.

Teresa Gutierrez, coordinator of the May 1 Immigrants Rights Coalition, said “we’re here not just on May Day but every day. We’ll keep fighting till we win!”

Nicolás, representing the indigenous people of Ecuador and the rest of the continent, spoke on behalf of non-immigrants: “Welcome to this country to all who come in peace and justice,” he said, “but not to Sheriff Arpaio [of Phoenix, AZ] and other racists.” He noted that President Obama is the son of an African immigrant, and should be expected to understand the rights of immigrants, and the racism they have suffered, and respond to them in a just way. “But,” he said, “it won’t happen without a fight.”

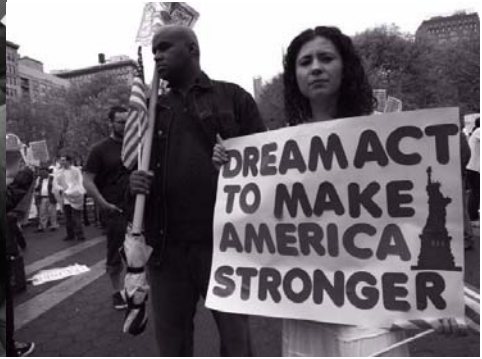
May Day 2009 NYC Photo Essay

Images: May Day Union Square

By Stanley W. Rogouski NYC Indymedia

About 1000 people rallied at Union Square for immigrant rights.





Milwaukee, WI

[Voces de la Frontera] Despite a bad economy, inclement weather, concerns about swine flu, and false rumors that the march had been cancelled around 30,000 people joined the Milwaukee May 1 march to support the Obama Administration's recent declarations in support of passing humane immigration reform in 2009 and to express their solidarity with immigrant families and workers.

The march snowballed from 100 to 1,000 to 20,000 to 30,000 as it wound its way from Milwaukee's Southside across the 6th street viaduct bridge, through downtown and into Veteran's Park.

Closing speakers at the Veteran's park rally included US Congresswoman Gwen Moore who said, "There isn't anyone or anything that can come between us on this issue." State Representative Pedro Colón, said, "Latino elected officials have made this a priority so that the Administration doesn't forget that we need a just immigration reform," then referencing his own work at the state legislative level, he said, "People need a drivers' license so they can live in peace and students need a fair tuition so they can go to college like their peers." The event was also supported by labor, faith, and diverse community based organizations.

Following the May 1 march, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera, said, "We need to stay united and work hard to ensure that the people have a voice in the legislative process so that we can achieve a legalization that is dignified of all immigrants in the United States." Voces de la Frontera will be organizing a series of community forums to get input on legislative proposals and an upcoming lobby day at the State Capitol.



Detroit, MI

5,000 rally in Detroit for immigrant rights

By Niraj Warikoo • Free Press Staff Writer • May 1, 2009

Waving Mexican and U.S. flags, thousands of immigrants and their supporters rallied in southwest Detroit today for immigrant rights.

Rally organizers called for comprehensive immigration reform that would offer a path to citizenship for legal and illegal immigrants, and for an end to deportations that they say separate families.

Over the past four years, the number of deportations in Michigan and across the U.S. has sharply increased.

For fiscal year 2008, 7,514 illegal immigrants in Michigan and Ohio were deported, compared to 4,144 in fiscal year 2007, an 81 percent increase. Compared to 2005, when 2,243 illegal immigrants were deported, that's a 235 percent increase.

The rally started at Patton Park and ended at Clark Park in the heart of the Mexican-American community. Rallyers held up placards that read "Stop the Raids," "Legalize Hard Work," and "No Human is Illegal."

“We need a more humane approach to immigration reform,” said Rosendo Delgado, a co-organizer with Latinos Unidos. This is the fourth annual immigration rally in Detroit. It was smaller compared to previous years when Congress was considering bills that would crack down on illegal immigration.

Detroit police estimated today’s crowd at 5,000 to 7,000.

Jhonatan Ferrer, 19, of Dearborn Heights said many illegal immigrants “live in the shadows of society” and need a path to citizenship so that employers and others can’t take advantage of them. Right now, Ferrer said, “they have no rights.”

Others expressed concerns about deportations and its affect on immigrant communities.

Khaalid Walls, a spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the government agency that oversees deportations, said the government has “increased strategic enforcement efforts to identity and remove criminal and fugitive aliens.”



Chicago, IL

Fewer March, But Pride Is Evident On May Day

Before stepping off to march, May Day participants from the estimated 70 organizations involved mingled and took photographs in Union Park, just west of the Loop.

Since the Chicago Haymarket riot of 1886, May 1 has long been an internationally recognized day to celebrate and demand workers rights, with May Day demonstrators marching from Paris to Iraq to the U.S.

In 2006, the first year organizers wove immigration reform into their demands for workers rights, the Chicago crowd of demonstrators reached an estimated 300,000 on March 10 and into the hundreds of thousands again on May 1. But at the last two Chicago marches, crowds have dwindled to about 2,000. Cities across the U.S. have experienced similar drops in attendance, with Los Angeles, New York and Miami also reporting far fewer attendees than expected.

Some have speculated that this year's turnout suffered from the bad weather in Chicago, mounting concerns about the spread of the H1N1 Influenza A virus (aka swine flu) and a decreased concern about immigration reform as President Obama has pledged to work toward developing a legalization path for undocumented immigrants before the end of the year. A tough economy made it difficult for some to take off work for the event and marchers also reported that a Chicago Spanish-language radio station had wrongly announced the march was canceled the morning of May 1.

Demonstrators met in Union Park, just west of the Loop at 10 a.m. and stepped off to march down Washington Blvd. toward Des Plaines about an hour and a half later. Protesters banged drums, called out into microphones and chanted "Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha" (Listen Obama, we're in the fight) as helicopters circled overhead. Marchers reached their final destination -- Federal Plaza at Dearborn and Adams in the Loop -- at about 1:30 p.m. after a two-hour, two-mile walk. Organizers estimate about 70 different groups and organizations -- ranging from student-led clubs to churches to activist groups -- attended the event.



Madison, WI

May Day Shows Community Solidarity!

Immigrant Workers Union (UTI)

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Madison, Wisconsin-May 1st, 2009

Today, around 600 to 700 people marched from Brittingham Park in Madison to the Capitol Square and on to the Dane County building demanding the rights of the "immigrants, the poor, and the workers." The fourth anniversary of the massive marches of spring 2006, hit Madison with renewed energy to further the agenda of solidarity among the poor the immigrants, and the workers. The demands that highlighted issues such as passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, universal health care, a repeal of the increased bus fare, and that the Dane County Sheriff step down.

The events began a little after 11 am with the arrival of students from local high schools and the University of Wisconsin.

The rally was opened with folk singer Vicki Guzman from Toronto and was followed by a series of speakers that included, John Peck from the IWW and several members of UW student organizations. (see below for the complete list) At the Capitol, there were a few words spoken by the president of the South Central Federation of Labor, Jim Cavanaugh; Carolina Ortega from MEChA who made a case for the passage of the Dream Act; recently fired Taco Bell workers on behalf of the Workers' Rights Center; Bill Franks from the State Employees Action Coalition; and Will Williams for the Madison Area Peace Coalition who inspired the crowd with his words on the importance of unity, solidarity, and grassroots organizing.

At the main event at the Dane County Building, the crowd heard words from Luis Rodriguez an activist from LA, students, workers, housing activists mixed with music from the Raging Grannies and the Chicano Son group, Son Mudanza.

Organizers of the event were content with the rally, "we have more diversity, broad support, and many youth this year because we've tied our struggle with that of other communities" said Yvonne Geerts of the IWU. However they point out that the outbreak of swine flu and the neglect of local radio "La Movida" to inform about the rally were major obstacles for this year's turnout.

La Movida, the only 24 hour Spanish language radio, neglected to inform listeners about the Madison rally yet announced the rally in Milwaukee and created confusion regarding whether or not there would be a rally in Madison. "We think La Movida's actions show poor journalism and artificially create divisions in the immigrant movement. Our community suffers a lot as it is and it is unfortunate that we don't have an unbiased, informative, serious radio station," said Alex Gillis of the IWU.

Nationally, the turnout at the rallies has been smaller, with some exceptions. Organizers across the nation credit this to the hopes people have for Obama to pass immigration reform, the fear of the consequences in missing a day of work in difficult economic times, and a general anti-immigrant climate with record numbers of raids and deportations all across the nation.

The Immigrant Workers' Union would like to thank the Madison community for its continued support of immigrant workers and for this year's tremendous show of solidarity.

New Orleans, LA

New Orleans, LA: Workers decry "wage theft" in protest at City Hall

by Gwen Filosa, The Times-Picayune Friday May 01, 2009

Helped by the Hot 8 Brass Band, about 50 people marched through downtown New Orleans this afternoon to protest the treatment of Latino workers in a post-Katrina city teeming with construction projects.

"Respecto y Dignidad," (Respect and Dignity) one man's sign read as the group gathered at the steps of City Hall, chanting in English and in Spanish demands that city leaders investigate their allegations of companies flush with recovery contracts failing to pay day laborers and construction workers.

The protest was organized by the Congress of Day Laborers and the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice, and

started at Louis Armstrong Park and headed toward City Hall. Along the way, the men and women stopped at the U.S. Department of Labor office, only to be greeted by a federal agent, said Saket Soni, director of the workers' center.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent called up to labor officials warning them that "this was obviously a protest against ICE and he wanted to make sure it didn't get violent," Soni said.

An attorney for the workers' center remained at the federal office to talk with officials about the greeting, Soni said.

Workers in New Orleans have been "robbed of thousands of dollars" in three cases, the protest organizers said.

"I am a father who because of wage theft can't provide for my sick daughter," said Mario Mendoza.

On April 15, the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice filed three complaints with the U.S. Department of Labor, naming contractors and subcontractors they accused of hiring workers for manual jobs and then shorting their pay.

The projects named in the complaints are: Savoy Apartments, formerly the Desire public housing development in the 9th Ward; the Walnut Square Apartments Project; and Oak Villa Apartments. All but the Oak Villa project have received state and federal money to build affordable housing as the city recovers from the 2005 hurricane season.

Workers today said that they only want fair treatment and protection from abuse. They didn't single out any one company, saying that home owners have at times refused to pay them for their work. They also spoke of muggings, robberies and violence suffered since they came to New Orleans.

Such treatment of Lation day laborers is common in the South, and especially in post-Katrina New Orleans, according to a recent report by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"Under Siege: Life for Low-Income Latinos in the South" by researcher Mary Bauer found that 41 percent of respondents had experienced wage theft. In New Orleans, 80 percent said they have been ripped off by employers while working on the region's recovery since Hurricane Katrina struck.

No other community studied reported as many cases of employer threats of violence against workers, Bauer said.



(Photos by: Abdul Aziz)

Providence, RI

Protestors call for end to immigration raids

By Karen Lee Ziner The Providence Journal



Art Kubick, of Providence, and Brown University student Beth Fish hold up signs during Friday's protest in Providence where demonstrators demanded changes in U.S. immigration policy outside ICE headquarters (The Providence Journal Ruben W. Perez)

PROVIDENCE: About 300 May Day demonstrators staged a peaceful but noisy rally outside the local U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement office Friday afternoon, demanding an end to immigration raids and calling for amnesty for illegal immigrants and national comprehensive immigration reform.

Similar annual May Day rallies were taking place around the country.

"We have a very clear message to send to ICE — you are not welcome here in Rhode Island any more," said Pat Crowley, of Rhode Island Jobs with Justice.

Demonstrators holding placards that said "Human Rights for All," "Stop the Deportations," and "ICE out of RI Now" filled Dyer Street and an adjacent traffic island, in front of the office. Among them were several of the 31 janitors arrested in last July's immigration raid on state courthouses, children of "mixed-status" families, community activists from Rhode Island and Massachusetts, labor leaders and clergy.

In a news release issued earlier Friday, Alfonso Velasco of the Community Defense Network of the Olneyville Neighborhood Association said, "This year, we are holding the demonstration at ICE to reject their tactics and the terror attacks by [Governor] Carcieri. If people see us standing together, right here at the ICE office, they will understand that we refuse to be afraid in our own neighborhood, at work or at home."

The office at 200 Dyer St., which houses both ICE and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (Homeland Security's non-enforcement arm), was closed before the rally got under way. However, ICE regional spokesman Michael Gilhooley said, "As an enforcement agency, ICE has an obligation to enforce the laws of our country as they are currently written. ICE welcomes comprehensive immigration reform."

A spokesperson for Carcieri could not be reached Friday.

"The state is experiencing a new wave of racial profiling, unleashed by a stroke of Governor Carcieri's pen," said Mary Kay Harris of DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality). She referred to the executive order Carcieri issued last year to crack down on illegal immigration in Rhode Island. The governor said he did so in the absence of federal immigration reform.

Juan Garcia, an organizer for St. Teresa Church, called for "legalization, not criminalization." He said there was "an atmosphere of fear and hysteria" in Rhode Island since last year's raids — on Aquidneck Island as well as on the courthouses, and Carcieri's order.

"Here in Rhode Island and all across the country, we need to stop the deportations and stop separating families," said Garcia. "We need immigration reform."

Even as speakers shouted their demands from a flatbed truck, and the What Cheer Brigade added tuba and percussion to the mix, change was under way in Washington, D.C.

The Homeland Security department issued new guidelines Thursday to ICE field offices around the country, requiring that ICE “prioritize the criminal prosecution of actual employers who knowingly hire illegal workers because such employers are not sufficiently punished or deterred by the arrest of their illegal work force,” according to The New York Times, which obtained a copy of those guidelines.

President Obama also said Wednesday that he is looking for “a more thoughtful approach than just raids of a handful of workers, as opposed to, for example, taking seriously the violation of companies that sometimes are actively recruiting these workers to come in.” He reiterated a campaign pledge to push for national immigration reform.

More than a dozen organizations were represented in Friday’s demonstration — among them, the American Friends Service Committee of Southeastern New England, The Committee of Immigrants in Action at St. Teresa Church in Olneyville, Fuerza Laboral (Power of Workers), and Rhode Island Jobs with Justice.

Houston, TX

Seeking immigration reform About 50 rally over the path to citizenship

By SUSAN CARROLL HOUSTON CHRONICLE May 1, 2009

About 50 immigrant advocates rallied in downtown Houston Friday in support of legislative reform that would offer illegal immigrants a path to citizenship, coinciding with marches across the country.

Organizers in Houston said the turnout was lower than expected, in part because of fears over the spread of swine flu. In other cities, including Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, thousands took to the streets, but crowds there also were much smaller than in previous years.

Supporters at the Houston rally outside the Mickey Leland Federal Building said they were encouraged by President Barack Obama’s plan to start pushing later this year for a reform package. The key component, they said, is a path toward citizenship for the nation’s estimated 11 million to 12 million undocumented immigrants.

Abraham Cisne, 26, said he’s optimistic for reform, despite the state of the economy, saying a legalization program “makes economic sense.”

Cisne’s parents brought him to the U.S. illegally when he was a year old, he said, and he spent years worried that if he made a mistake, it could result in his deportation.

“It really restricts and limits everything,” he said.

Cisne, who was born in Nicaragua, said he became a naturalized U.S. citizen about five years ago but still worries for his extended family members and friends without legal status.

Michael Carlsen, a 54-year-old Houston contractor, was one of only a few opponents of immigration reform who stopped by the rally. Carlsen said he firmly opposes any kind of “amnesty” proposal.

“I think it sends a very bad signal to break the law because then we just say, ‘It’s OK. We’ll give you amnesty,’ ” he said.

“They’re not bad people, don’t get me wrong,” he said. “But they’re here illegally. They came in through the back door.”

This year’s rallies paled in comparison with 2006, when hundreds of thousands of immigrants took to the streets across the country, with a Houston turnout estimated at roughly 10,000.

Washington, DC

Rally in DC for immigration reform and against raids and deportations

[<http://carlosqc.blogspot.com>] About 2,000 people rallied today in the streets of Washington, DC to remind president Obama to meet his promises of an immigration reform and to ask him to stop raids, incarcerations and deportations of immigrants. Also to demand U.S. Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill this year.



San Jose, CA

San Jose immigration march has spirited but small turnout amid flu fears and light rain

By Jessie Mangaliman San Jose Mercury News 05/01/2009

Defying worries about a growing swine flu pandemic and braving spring rain, hundreds of immigrants and their supporters marched to downtown San Jose on Friday evening, hoping to drum up support for legislation that would create a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

"Because people are here, and they have a voice, this is a success," said Martha Campos, a volunteer with Comite Cesar Chavez, a San Jose immigrant advocacy group. "It doesn't matter that it's raining and people are thinking about a public-health issue. We are here and we're speaking out." Police estimated the three-block long phalanx to be only 400 marchers, while a loose count indicated about 1,000 participants.

The three-mile march from San Jose's East Side to downtown City Hall was part of a national push to reform the country's immigration system, one that includes legalization of an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the United States. May Day marches were held in cities across the country.

Dennis Gonzalez, 26, a third-year graduate student at San Jose State University, was at City Hall to welcome the marchers, holding up a sign reading "Reform not Raids." "My parents were undocumented immigrants from El Salvador," he said.

"If they had not been given the opportunity to become legal, I would not be here. I came to support." Gonzalez and his friend Laura Cabral, 24, also an SJSU graduate student, dismissed worries about the swine flu and public gatherings.

Organizers had consulted county public health officials, who said that there was no ban on public gatherings.

In the background, the marchers chanted, "Obama, escucha. Estamos en la lucha," or "Obama, listen. We're in a struggle." The administration of President Barack Obama has signaled interest in advancing legalization. This week, the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Immigration began hearings on reform, and the federal government also announced plans to focus enforcement on employers and scale back on raids where illegal immigrants have been swept up and deported.

Groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform oppose the call for legalization, denouncing it as a "free pass, an amnesty" for people who have violated immigration and criminal laws. It failed in the previous administration under a Republican president, said FAIR spokesman Ira Mehlman, not because of lack of political will on Capitol Hill, but because the American public was against it.

"What has changed is our economic situation: Millions of people are unemployed and states are teetering on a budget abyss," he said. "Talk of amnesty simply ignores all these other realities. We simply don't have the resources."

Arriving at San Jose City Hall on Santa Clara Street between Fifth and Sixth streets, waving U.S. and Mexican flags, marchers chanted the urgency of reform, legalization, and the importance of reuniting immigrant families split by deportations.

"By marching we hope to send a strong message to Congress and to our president," said Adel Olvera, director of immigration and citizenship program for the Center for Employment and Training in San Jose. "This is still very important to us."

While the march was spirited, it was a disappointing turnout for organizers who had hoped to draw as many as 10,000 participants. In 2006, the same event drew in excess of 125,000. But worries about the growing spread of swine flu, its links to Mexico and the late afternoon rain clearly affected the turnout.

Organizers and immigration advocates also voiced concerns about the "scapegoating" of Mexican immigrants as the source of the swine flu. American and international medical experts have not determined the exact source of the pandemic but some opponents of legalization, calling it "the Mexican flu," have suggested it was brought into the United States by illegal immigrants who escaped border inspection.

"We know that people who like to blame Mexicans are going to blame them for this outbreak, too," said Ruth Robertson, a member of the Raging Grannies, one of the many Bay Area groups that joined the march in support of legalization. "This would certainly be in line with past cases of motivation based on racism and bigotry."



Minneapolis, MN

[Minneapolis Indymedia] On May 1, hundreds rallied and marched down Lake St. in Minneapolis in support of immigrant rights. The demonstration was organized by the MN Immigrant Rights Action Coalition and the May 1st Coalition around the following demands:

- Stop the Raids and Deportations
- Drivers Licenses for All
- Unconditional Legalization for All Now
- Support the Employee Free Choice Act

Immigrants and their families were joined by trade unionists, anti-war activists, students, human rights advocates, and anti-capitalists. Some participants wore t-shirts calling Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) the real criminals. The t-shirts were designed for a 7 am demonstration Wednesday, May 6 at ICE headquarters in Bloomington.

The march culminated with an outdoor festival that included speeches, music, and theater. Performances demonstrated the hoarding of land and resources by the U.S. as well as the power of solidarity among social justice movements.

Photos By: Rev. John Guttermann, he estimated the crowd of 2,000 participants



Newark, NJ

Immigration rally draws 200

BY JEFF DIAMANT, Star-Ledger

Nearly 200 people marched in Newark's Lincoln Park yesterday, demanding immigration reform that would allow illegal immigrants a path to citizenship, at one of dozens of May Day marches held around the country.

As they walked the park's perimeter, the ralliers chanted "Yes we can," "Yes we will," and "Congress Listen ... we're going to fight" They held signs reading "Reform Not Raids" and "Ningun ser humano es ilegal," or "No human being is illegal."

"We would like to see reform to let people stay, to let people who are here have the opportunity to be legal," said Carmen Salabarieta of Angels in Action, a group that helps Hispanic people in Plainfield. "We're talking about people who have been here for years, so that they can work and support their families."

The people there hope President Obama is able to agree with Congress on comprehensive immigration reform. The prospects of such a package passing are unclear.

Marchers included workers, members of a property services union and members of immigration advocacy groups such as the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network. Trailing the group were men and women pushing two dozen pushcarts used to sell ices in the street.

"'Yes we can' is over!," yelled Shai Goldstein, executive director of the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network, citing the phrase that gained attention during Obama's campaign. "'Yes we will' in 2009 have immigration reform, an end to raids, and comprehensive health care reform that respects the humanity of everyone!"

Louisville, KY

May Day09 Action Report: Louisville, Kentucky

Stephen Bartlett
Co-Convener of KY May Day Coalition

In Louisville, Kentucky the KY May Day Coalition held a March and Rally on Friday, May 1st, 2009. Despite this falling on Derby Week between the Pegasus Parade and the Kentucky Derby, and despite of forecasts for 80% probability of rain, we had an enthusiastic showing of some 450 to 500 people, among them many youth from four counties advocating for the Dream Act, representatives from three unions and groups of non-unionized workers, and immigrants and community allies from the religious and social justice community, both English and Spanish speaking.

Guest speaker Veronica Leyva of the Mexico Solidarity Network joined union organizers such as Mike Watters of the Regional Ironworkers, on the podium, along with Mexican dancers, and local singers. A brilliant skit performed by the Oldham County high school students on the Dream Act was especially well received. Karinna Barillas of the Movement of Latina Women spoke, translated by Nicolasa Menchu, of Comite K'iche.

The KY Labor Cabinet sent their deputy secretary, longtime union organizer Mark Brown to assure KY workers that the government stood behind them regardless of their immigration status, race, or ethnicity, and affirmed calls for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. Rachel Newton, immigration lawyer and active member of the Kentucky Coalition for Immigration and Refugee Rights (KCIRR) explained what the country needs, and does NOT need, in the next attempt to pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

Intensive Spanish language radio spots and live interviews twice daily all week, plus six weeks of announcements in Spanish language print media had helped get the word out.

The march was covered by at least one television station and the Courier Journal newspaper, as well as Lexington papers and religious news services.

Siler City, NC

May Day 2009 Report from Siler City, NC

Ronald Garcia-Fogarty Executive Director
El Vínculo Hispano / The Hispanic Liaison

We organized a workshop titled "Conozca sus Deerechos cuando viene la Migra", co-facilitated by Ilana Dubester, Interim Director of the Centro Latino de Carrboro, and Sandra Forrester, Community Outreach Coordinator of the Hispanic Liaison. The workshop was co-sponsored by El Vínculo Hispano and El Programa de Necesidades Basicas del Condado de Chatham, and was held at Virginia Cross Elementary, Siler City, NC.

Durham, NC



Fresno, CA

May Day march held in Fresno

The Fresno Bee

About 200 people braved the rain Friday to march for immigration reform in downtown Fresno.

The march, sponsored by several minority rights groups including the Mexican American Political Association and Comité Pro Uno, began at Eaton Plaza.

It was one of hundreds of May Day marches held nationwide. Demonstrators at the marches called for an end to immigration raids, legalization of undocumented workers and an easier path to U.S. citizenship.

Officials said crowds at the marches were reportedly smaller than in previous years, possibly in reaction to concerns over the H1N1 flu virus.

During 2006, hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated at numerous events across the nation to beat back a bill that aimed to stiffen penalties for illegal immigration.

Thousands of California students walked out of classes that March, among numerous protests that led up to a May "Day Without Immigrants" worker boycott.



Boston, MA

May Day March Brings Hope, Excitement to Boston Area Immigrant Neighborhoods

by Jason Pramas Open Media Boston

BOSTON/East Boston - Over 500 people from 2 dozen immigrant, labor and religious organizations marched through wind and rain to demand more rights for immigrants and better labor conditions for all in the United States on the traditional May 1st workers holiday today. The group processed from Central Square in East Boston past Chelsea City Hall to Glendale Park in Everett - meeting groups of supporters along the way. Thousands of residents of the predominantly immigrant neighborhoods smiled, cheered, or stared in surprise as the marchers passed them by on the 3 mile march route. Some - apparently native born Americans - alternately jeered or made supportive comments, depending on their point of view.

The event was organized by the May 1st Coalition and - after almost a decade of similar annual events - is gradually becoming a Boston tradition.



Santa Rosa, CA

May 1st event in Santa Rosa, California

[zenekar@comcast.net] Rain didn't stop 500 concerned people from gathering in Santa Rosa, California, and taking the streets to call for justice for all workers, immigrant rights, and an end to the County Sheriff's collaboration with ICE ("Homeland Security" Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

Rainy welcome for labor immigration march

By LAURA NORTON THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

About 450 people swathed in rain gear marched for pro-immigration rights from Roseland to Old Courthouse Square on Friday, their message muted by bad weather and fears of swine flu.

Marchers dwindled to under 100 when they arrived at the downtown plaza, shivering as they shouted “Si se puede,” the slogan of the United Farmworkers, an immigrants rights group.

May 1 is celebrated worldwide as International Labor Day. In California the date has taken on significance for the Latino immigrant community with rallies and boycotts to show support for undocumented workers.

In past years, as many as 10,000 people have gathered for the march, held annually on May 1.

Organizers in Roseland Friday said they had three points to make with their march to downtown.

“One, justice and respect for all workers. Two, we are asking for non-collaboration of local law enforcement with ICE. Three, that Obama stop ICE raids,” said Lobo Madriz, who led the group of mostly young adults and families.”

ICE, which stands for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, is the federal agency responsible for enforcing immigration laws.

The march was organized by the Committee for Immigrant Rights of Sonoma County and attended by leaders of several local religious congregations.

“It’s cold but it’s worth it at the end,” 18-year-old Karina Serrano said. “We need to stand up for our rights as immigrants.”

Serrano said she sees friends who are illegal immigrants struggling because they are not able to get driver’s licenses or well-paid jobs.

“We want to have the same rights as everyone else,” she said.

About 2,500 people participated in a mid-day march last year that ended in Juilliard Park. An estimated 10,000 people, many of them undocumented workers, marched in 2007. That event was believed to be one of the largest rallies ever held on the North Coast.

Participants gathered this year at 3 p.m. at the former Albertson’s parking lot in Roseland where they huddled under the building’s awning for shelter from the rain.

They began marching at 4:30, taking up one lane of traffic as they made their way to Old Courthouse Square. About 25 Santa Rosa police officers were on hand to block intersections during the march, which lasted about an hour.

Madriz said wet weather and fear of the swine flu likely kept people away this year.

A small counter-demonstration by the North Coast Minutemen took place across the street from the May 1 rally in Old Courthouse Square. About 70 people took part in that demonstration last year.





San Francisco, CA

Workers' Rights and Immigration Reform Combine for May Day Observances

By Luke Thomas, Fog City Journal
May 2, 2009

Undaunted by inclement weather and fears of Swine Flu contagion, as many as 1500 San Franciscans used the traditional International Labor Day observances yesterday to rally support for workers' rights and immigration reform.

Several elected officials, labor reps and members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, joined the procession billed as "Workers Without Borders - United in Struggle" at Dolores Park for a speakers rally before marching under rain-drenched skies to Civic Center.

"We need to make sure the City and County and San Francisco remains committed to being a sanctuary city and that the rights of immigrants are protected," said Supervisor David Campos who, himself, was an undocumented immigrant when, at age 14, he emigrated from Mexico to the US. "We have a local government that is turning over undocumented youth to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), and that is unacceptable."

According to Campos, Mayor Gavin Newsom has turned his back on the City's 1989 voter-approved Sanctuary Ordinance that prohibits police and other City agencies from inquiring into immigration status, or providing assistance to federal immigration enforcement authorities unless required by federal or state law, or by warrant.

Newsom's shift away from protecting undocumented immigrants from federal persecution and racial profiling followed a series of politically explosive San Francisco Chronicle articles that reported the shooting deaths of three family members in the Excelsior District by an undocumented immigrant in June 2008. The articles focused on tying the Bologna family shooting tragedy to the city's Sanctuary Ordinance with the effect of whipping up anti-immigrant hysteria and generating condemnation of the ordinance.

During a meeting of the Democratic County Central Committee (DCCC) in March, a resolution demanding Newsom redirect law enforcement efforts "away from criminalizing the immigrant community and to uphold constitutional due process laws," passed overwhelmingly.

But Newsom remained unsympathetic and disputed the resolution's premise, despite reports of increased traffic stops involving ethnic minorities by local law enforcement following a separate shooting incident in the Mission District.

"Our law enforcement officials do not engage in the conduct alleged by this resolution," Newsom spokesperson Nathan Ballard said.

Those undocumented immigrants identified during traffic stops who are reported to ICE - whether they have committed a crime or not - have been subsequently deported without trial.

“Early on, our preference was to see if the mayor’s office would do the right thing and change its policy – and we have been trying to work with them to see if they’re open to that,” Campos said during an interview. “At first they indicated that they were, but it’s pretty clear right now to us that they’re not going to change their policy – and because of that, we’re now proceeding to change the policy through legislation.”

Campos said he will be meeting with his colleagues on the Board of Supervisors and advocacy groups in the coming days and weeks to hammer out prescriptive legislation to restore the Sanctuary Ordinance provisions and to force Newsom to comply with the law as approved by the electorate.

“It is important for us to make sure that we’re strategic about how we approach this,” Campos continued, “but we think we can put together a legislative solution that makes sense from a policy standpoint, and from a legal standpoint.”

“It’s too bad that it’s going to take legislation, and there was hope that maybe the mayor’s office would reconsider without it, but that’s not where they are right now,” Campos said, adding “You cannot get elected to statewide office without the support of our community, and how the Latino community in San Francisco is being treated will be something the people in Southern California and other parts of the state will want to know, and I think that it’s important for us to keep an eye towards that.”

California State Assemblymember Tom Ammiano told the umbrellaed crowd: “I know that San Francisco is a sanctuary city. I want California to be a sanctuary state.”

And without citing radio personalities Michael Savage and Neal Bortz by name for using the spread of the Swine Flu virus to renew anti-immigrant rhetoric, an animated Ammiano had this to say: “The swines who brought in the flu are not immigrants. Las cochinas who say that people who are not citizens, infect other people – that is total bullshit and hysteria.”



Riverside, CA

The Inland Empire Marches on May Day

by Jennaya Dunlap - LA Indymedia

Riverside, CA (May 1, 2009) – Twenty eight groups from all over the Inland Empire —immigrant rights groups, unions, workers, students, clergy, and human rights activists— united today to call for fair, comprehensive reform to end abuses against immigrants, workers, and their families. Students kicked off the march with a traditional ritual at UCR's Bell Tower, and then joined supporters from Riverside and San Bernardino counties at Cesar Chavez Community Center to continue their journey to City Hall.

The march concluded with a program and celebration near the Martin Luther King Jr. statue at City Hall. Live music from Son Real accompanied the march and Mula, a local Latin-ska band, greeted the marchers as they arrived. Speakers addressed the need for reform to support immigrants and workers, as well as the continuing raids, deportations, and separations of immigrant families.

María Harte, a Winchester mother who emigrated from Portugal thirty-six years ago, spoke of how current immigration policies torn apart her family. Her brother, a father of six children, was given notice of deportation for a misdemeanor committed thirteen years ago, for which he had already served time. To avoid the trauma of a raid, he turned himself in and was deported to Mexico.

"Removing a pillar of our family, such as Luis, has been devastating and led to a heart broken, emotionally drained atmosphere in our once happy home," said Harte, calling for an end to the separation of families by brutal immigration enforcement tactics currently in place.

Another speaker in today's program, a student from Rubidoux High School, spoke about the DREAM Act and the way its passage would change the future of students like her. "It would be such a great opportunity for us to prove to this country that we have talent to offer other than the usual stereotypes," she said. "All I need is the opportunity."

Over the past several months, Border Patrol and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in the Inland Empire reached a new peak in their reckless abuse of human rights and violations of basic civil liberties, targeting neighborhoods, day laborer corners, bakeries, bus stations, and even people simply leaving a hospital or grocery store.

In Riverside, police and Border Patrol raided a Latino neighborhood, terrifying residents to the point that they feared leaving their homes even to buy groceries. Local activists witnessed clear evidence of racial profiling, as immigrants were specifically targeted for arrest for minor offenses and handed over to Border Patrol.

Inland Empire communities and members of the May Day Coalition called on President Obama to work toward immediate immigration reform that includes human rights for all immigrants; ending the raids and deportations that are tearing apart hundreds of families and stopping racist profiling. Additionally, participants called on the US Senate and the House of Representatives to pass legislation on the Employee Free Choice Act that would allow workers the right to organize and have better protections at work.

"We are not just marching now, but will continue our efforts day by day to build unity, to register people to vote, and to help them naturalize and get citizenship," said José Calderón, a professor from Pitzer College.

Calderón, a local leader and organizer in the region, addressed the crowds on the issue of cultural unity. "Through these marches we are working to build unity between groups, to not allow ourselves to aim our anger and frustrations at each other in this time of economic crisis," he continued.

"I am proud to be part of an effort that is bringing together students, unions, community-based organizations, and coalitions throughout the Inland Empire, across racial, gender and class lines," concluded Calderón.





Vermont



2. The Americas and Caribbean

Toronto, ONT Canada

May Day 2009 - No One Is Illegal, Toronto, Turtle Island

By: socialistproject.ca

On April 2nd and 3rd, over 100 temporary and undocumented workers were attacked by armed border guards, dragged in to detention and are now being forcibly deported. No One Is Illegal has been working tirelessly against these tactics by the conservative government. On May 2nd, thousands of people demonstrated, chanted and danced through the streets of Toronto, against these deportations and celebrated May Day. This is one of many demonstrations for migrant rights in different parts of the world remaking the working class movement. We say - no one is illegal.

Latin America: May Day Marches Focus on Crisis

By: **Weekly News Update on the Americas**
weeklynewsupdate@gmail.com

In Latin America, as in much of the world, the traditional International Workers Day marches this May 1 focused on the global economic crisis and especially on increases in the unemployment rate, which is approaching 10% in many areas.

About 10,000 Chileans marched in Santiago on May 1 in a protest organized by the Unified Workers Confederation (CUT), the country's largest labor confederation. CUT president Arturo Martínez demanded "a new law that distributes the wealth," a right to strike without the threat of firings and replacement workers, and an end to the practice of letting firms lay workers off "because of the company's needs." After the main demonstration had ended, small groups of people wearing masks attacked the police, who responded with tear gas and water cannons. Dozens of people were arrested. (La Opinión (Los Angeles) 5/2/09 from AP)

Some 100,000 Argentine unionists gathered in downtown Buenos Aires on Apr. 30 for an early May Day event that was in effect a rally for President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and her husband, former president Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007). Their supporters in the populist Justicialist Party (PJ, Peronist) face serious challenges in June congressional elections. "What is being debated is not the form of a model of government," said Hugo Morano, president of the General Workers Confederation (CGT). "What is being debated is the fundamental question, and it's [whether] to snatch away from us the victories we have reached in recent times. The choice is to support a national, people's model that has as its objective dignifying humans, or we go back to the decade of the '90s, where they robbed us and took everything from us."

Argentina experienced massive privatizations and corruption under the neoliberal policies of president Carlos Saúl Menem (1989-1999), which were followed by a financial collapse in 2001. Economic growth returned under Kirchner and Fernández but halted with the onset of the global crisis in 2008. Moyano has reportedly persuaded Kirchner to include union officials on the PJ ticket in June. (Latin American Herald Tribune 4/30/09 from EFE)

In Brazil thousands of workers participated in celebrations in the main cities on May 1, with performances by musical groups and speeches by union leaders calling for lower interest rates to stimulate the economy in response to the crisis. (La Opinión 5/2/09 from AP)

In Bolivia President Evo Morales marked May 1 by signing a decree nationalizing the Bolivian subsidiary of British aviation fuel supplier AirBP in a ceremony before a massive crowd in La Paz's Plaza de Armas. Morales ordered the military and state oil company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB) to take over AirBP, which owns 12 jet fuel service stations at airports in La Paz, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Tarija, Beni and Pando. Morales--who had previously nationalized oil and telecommunications companies--also extended workers' benefits, requiring employers to provide mandatory severance pay after 90 months of continuous work and to provide social security coverage for temporary employees. (AFP 5/1/09; La Tribuna (Honduras) 5/1/09 from AFP)

Thousands of workers marched in Ecuador's main cities carrying signs with slogans such as "Let the gringos pay for the capitalist crisis," and "Reject the government's labor policy." At the Quito march, Edwin Bedoya, vice president of the Unified Workers Front, praised some of the changes made by the government of leftist president Rafael Correa. "But we

criticize others," Bedoya said, "like the layoffs of the compañeros at Petroecuador" (Empresa Estatal Petróleos del Ecuador, the state-owned oil company).

In Colombia, unions and retirees' organizations mobilized thousands of workers with slogans against unemployment, President Alvaro Uribe's bid for reelection and the ongoing violence against unionists. Marchers also called for a negotiated settlement to the armed conflict with leftist rebels such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). "We believe that peace with social justice has to be developed here," Unitary Workers Central (CUT) president Tarsicio Mora said in Bogotá, calling the government's neoliberal economic model a failure.

Unions supporting Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez held a massive march in Caracas, which also witnessed confrontations between police agents and opposition unionists at a separate march which the police dispersed with tear gas and water cannons.

Thousands of workers marched in 11 cities in Honduras with slogans against the US-sponsored Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). This was the fourth year in a row that the three main labor federations marched together despite their political differences.

Thousands of Cubans took part in the traditional government-sponsored march, headed by President Raúl Castro, to the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana. Slogans included calls for economic efficiency and support for the government, established by the 1959 Revolution. (La Opinión 5/2/09 from AP)

Mexico's three main labor federations--the centrist Congress of Labor (CT), the independent National Workers Union (UNT) and the more radical Mexican Union Front (FSM)--called off their planned May Day activities in Mexico City following recommendations from health officials trying to control the spread of the H1N1 influenza ("swine flu"). Health Secretary José Angel Córdova Villalobos ordered a suspension of all non-essential services from May 1 to May 5; the National Chamber of the Manufacturing Industry (CANACINTRA) said its members didn't have to pay wages to workers during the forced layoffs. (MRzine 5/1/09)

More than 30,000 Mexicans marched on May 1 despite the suspension of May Day activities in Mexico City. The largest march was in Puebla, capital of the eastern central state of Puebla. Some 25,000 people from 15 unions and campesino and activist groups participated in a UNT march to the city's zócalo (main plaza). "Face masks aren't enough to silence the conscience of the people" and "More harmful than the influenza—the government without shame" were among the chants. The largest contingent was made up of dissidents from sections 23 and 51 of the National Education Workers Union (SNTE). Teachers were also a major force in a march of about 3,000 workers in Tuxtla Gutiérrez in the southeastern state of Chiapas and in a protest by 1,000 workers in Cuernavaca in the central state of Morelos, where teachers fought the government's Alliance for Quality Education (ACE) program last fall [see Update #968]. Smaller marches were held in other states, including Oaxaca, Guanajuato and Chihuahua. (La Jornada (Mexico) 5/2/09)

Haitian riot police used tear gas to disperse a march of several hundred students, teachers, unionist and others a few blocks from the National Palace in Port-au-Prince, causing panic and minor injuries. The marchers—organized by the Collective for Another May 1 around demands to raise the minimum wage [see Update #984]--regrouped later in the Champ de Mars, the capital's main plaza, where the government of President René Prével was holding an agricultural and crafts fair around the theme: "solidarity between employers, workers, peasants and artisans to reinforce national production." "It's not normal for us to be unable to demonstrate peacefully and freely on May 1," said a member of the organizing committee of the collective, which is made up of the Popular Democratic Movement (MODEP), Tèt Kole Ti Peyizan Ayisyen ("Small Haitian Peasants Unity"), Batay Ouvriye ("Workers Struggle") and other groups. (AlterPresse 5/1/09)

In the French Caribbean department of Guadeloupe, some 20,000 people marked May 1 with a celebration of the 44-day general strike that won an increase in the minimum wage and price reductions for basic necessities earlier in the year [see Update #982]. The demonstrators marched to Petit-Canal, the burial site of unionist Jacques Bino, who was killed on Feb. 17 in a night of violence during the generally peaceful strike. This was the first united May Day march for the island's leading labor organizations: the General Union of Guadeloupe Workers (UGTG), led by Elie Domota; the General Confederation of Labor of Guadeloupe (CGTG), led by Jean-Marie Nomertin; and the more radical Central of United Workers (CTU). But the march showed signs of tensions in the Collective Against Extreme Exploitation (LKP), the coalition that led the general strike: the CTU's Alex Lollia denounced the LKP as a "petit bourgeois movement." (Le Monde (France) 5/2/09)

In Puerto Rico the Broad Front of Solidarity and Struggle (FASyL), a coalition of 22 unions, held a one-day general strike and a march to protest what unionists said was a plan by Gov. Luis Fortuño to respond to the economic crisis by laying off 30,000-60,000 public employees and by "dismantling" the state through "the privatization of the country's essential public services." According to the police, 30,000 people participated in demonstrations in San Juan, during which Rafael

Feliciano, leader of the militant Teachers' Federation of Puerto Rico (FMPR), shouted "murderer" at Police Superintendent José Figueroa Sancha. (Feliciano said later that Figueroa was involved in the killing of independence activist Filiberto Ojeda Ríos in September 2005.) Gov. Fortuño, of the conservative New Progressive Party (PNP), said he was studying alternatives for the workers to be laid off by the law he has proposed; he claimed that 40 states in the US have laid off public employees because of the crisis without giving any thought to situation of the workers.

Mexico

May Day Protests Cancelled by Swine Flu (H1N1) As Mexican Workers Face Yet Another Crisis

by Dan La Botz

In Mexico, May Day, the international labor holiday, has been cancelled for the first time in the country's history.

All of the major federations -- the government-backed, conservative, and often corrupt "official" unions of the Congress of Labor (CT) as well as the independent National Union of Workers (UNT) and Mexican Union Front (FSM) -- have called off their planned May Day activities in Mexico City because of recommendations from health officials concerned about swine flu, or as it is now being called H1N1.

The independent unions had planned to march in support of the Mexican Miners Union, now locked in a life-and-death struggle against Grupo Mexico and the Mexican government. But the unions have had to postpone their protests. H1N1 has stopped the Mexican workers' demonstrations, at least for now, but it has not stopped unions from speaking out.

One union coalition has issued a statement strongly criticizing government policies and arguing that the government response to the flu epidemic, like its response to the drug cartels, has harmed Mexican workers, not simply because of its failure to find the measures to contain the disease, but also because of the economic and psychological impacts and the feared further loss of workers' rights. The effects on workers are many.

Workers Get Unpaid Layoff

Already facing the partial militarization of the country because of the government's war with the drug cartels -- a war that has taken 8,500 lives -- and an economic crisis that has caused plant closings and layoffs, now Mexican workers find themselves facing health risks, psychological stress, and the economic consequences of the swine flu. Jose Angel Cordova Villalobos, Mexico's Secretary of Health, ordered a five-day suspension of all non-essential services from May 1 until May 5, meaning a forced and in many cases unpaid layoff for many workers.

CANACINTRA, the National Chamber of the Manufacturing Industry, announced that its members did not have to pay wages to workers staying home those five days. An attorney for the Chamber explained that under Article 427 of the Federal Labor Law, employers do not have to pay workers when the business is closed because of force majeure, that is due to forces beyond their control. The current health emergency is just such a force majeure. While the Chamber's spokesperson recommends that employers pay workers, there is no guarantee that they will and a good chance that they won't (Manuel Lombrera y Julian Sanchez, "Trabajadores pagaran el mayor costo del paro," El Universal, May 1, 2008).

While most workers will be affected by the five-day layoff, the tourist industry has been hit especially hard by the swine flu, and there could be much longer layoffs there. The Mexican border towns of Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez have already lost tourist business because of the drug war violence, now H1N1 is affecting other areas as well. The illness in Mexico has led a host of countries -- Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, the United States, and others -- to recommend that their citizens avoid Mexico. Some airlines have cancelled or cut back on flights while cruises are being rerouted around Mexican ports. Tens of thousands of U.S. tourists are now in the process of leaving the Mexican Caribbean Riviera to return home.

Hotel, nightclub, and restaurant workers will no doubt face layoffs.

Grupo Mexico, Maquiladoras Continue Working

Despite the government's call for non-essential businesses to close, Grupo Mexico, the mining company, and maquiladora plants along the border have announced that they will keep working. Grupo Mexico, already responsible for the death of 65 miners at the Pasta de Conchos mine on Feb. 19, 2006, according to the International Labor Organization, apparently has no more regard for questions of public health than it does for workers safety.

Cesar Castro of the Nacional Council of the Maquiladora and Export Manufacturing Industry (CNIMME) told the press that the maquiladora plants would ignore the government's public health order and "continue to meet our obligations to the corporations." He said that some workers would work from home by computer, that special precautions would be taken with pregnant women, who would be sent home, and that all workers would be issued masks.

"Terrible Fear" and "Severe Panic"

The Mexican Union Front has issued a statement accusing Secretary of Health Cordova of "complete ineptitude," claiming that the government knew of this flu since February and did nothing about it. The FSM argues that the Secretary of Health's incompetent responses have been responsible for the development of a "violent media campaign which has provoked terrible fear and a severe panic among the national population, the result of a lack of real, verifiable, and clear information which would have allowed our population to recover the calm so necessary at moments such as these" (FSM, "Alto a la politica de miedo y sicosis frente a la contingencia sanitaria").

The FSM also objected to the latest health decree which gives the government the right to enter into any building in order to carry out its work and the power to shut down any meeting or gathering. With the recent war on drugs having led to a long string of abuses by the military, as reported recently by Human Rights Watch, the union is understandably suspicious of the government, its motives and objectives. HRW's 76-page report details 17 cases of military abuses against more than 70 victims in 2007 and 2008. "The abuses include killings, torture, rapes, and arbitrary detentions. Not one of the military investigations into these crimes has led to a conviction for even a single soldier on human rights violations." The unions clearly fear that the health emergency will be another excuse for violations of workers' rights and human rights.

What Is the Real National Emergency?

The Mexican Union Front points out that thanks to neoliberal economic policies, Mexico is a nation of tremendous economic disparities. While Carlos Slim, the country's richest man has a fortune valued at 35 billion dollars, and others like Grupo Mexico owner German Larrea are also incredibly rich, 20 percent of all Mexicans live in extreme poverty. Poverty, the FSM suggests, is not irrelevant to wellbeing and public health.

The FSM points out that 3.3 million children between 6 and 14 years of age work in Mexico, while 8,000 children die every year from malnutrition. Yet, asks the FSM, has the government ever called that a national health emergency? "Never!"



(Photo: Mexico City)

Havana, Cuba

Raúl presides over May Day celebration in Havana

Gramma (Cuba)

CUBAN President Raúl Castro Ruz led the principal event and parade celebrating May Day in Plaza de la Revolución in the Cuban capital.

Alongside Raúl were Communist Party and state leaders, leaders of popular organizations, such as labor union representatives from countries invited to the festivities, and the diplomatic corps. Among participants in the people's rally who stood out for their vibrancy was a group of 40,000 students from all educational levels, including 10,000 from the University of Computer Science, from the Union of Young Communists (UJC).

In contrast to other countries, celebrations for International Workers day on the island renews its workers' commitment to increase production and efficiency in the midst of the economic crisis lashing humanity.

In other parts of the world, the commemoration is an opportune moment for protest demonstrations and to demand an end to unemployment and guarantees of better working conditions.

The 1st Congress of the Second International, celebrated in Paris in 1889, constituted May 1 as International Workers Day in commemoration of the Haymarket Massacre of Chicago workers in 1886.

(Photo: Estimated Half Million People Celebrate May Day in Havana, Cuba)



San Juan, Porto Rico

Puerto Rico: May Day General Strike

Tens of thousands participated in demonstrations in San Juan on May 1 as a strike was called against pro-statehood Governor Luis Fortuño's announcement to fire 30,000 workers. He has also backed Law #7 which allows him to disregard existing labor contracts. As workers marched he declared he was not backing down.

As in other recent labor actions (on Wednesday a call for a picket grew into a 15,000 strong protest against the governor's economic speech) there has been an effort by different labor federations to work together. Although Puerto Rican unions led the way, AFL and Change to Win unions have also participated in protests as their members are also in danger of losing their jobs. AFL and Change to Win raided Puerto Rican unions of members promising better salaries and benefits. Now they face mass firings. They also opposed last year's teacher's strike and were later defeated when SEIU tried to represent teachers.

The Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico, UTIER (from the state owned electric company), workers of the state-owned water company, University of Puerto Rico unionized staff, bus drivers and mechanics, firemen; a total of at least 22 unions took part from the public and private sectors.

Left organizations like the Socialist Front, Refundacion Comunista, Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores, Movimiento Al Socialismo and anti imperialist Puerto Rican Independence Party and Movimiento Independentista Nacional Hostosiano and thousands of students participated. Some leaders of the Popular Democratic Party (pro colony bourgeois party) also backed the strike call and have spoken at some rallies.

(Photos from: elnuevodia.com)



Venezuela

Venezuela Celebrates May Day with Peaceful Protests and Some Clashes

by Tamara Pearson - Venezuelanalysis.com

One of the marches heading towards Urdaneta Avenue in Caracas on Friday (ABN) Mérida, May 2nd 2009 (Venezuelanalysis.com) - Thousands marched in Caracas and across Venezuela yesterday to celebrate the International Workers' Day. Sectors of a small opposition march in Caracas caused violence, clashes with police, and minor injuries.

The pro-government mayor of Caracas, Jorge Rodriguez, approved two march routes in Caracas: one by the National Front of Bolivarian Workers, and the other by the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (CTV), the opposition associated trade union federation.

The National Front of Bolivarian Workers march, supported by the National Union of Workers (Unete, which split from the CTV after it supported the coup against Chávez in April 2002), the Socialist Confederation of Workers (CST) and the Cruz Villegas current of the Confederation of United Venezuelan Workers (CUTV), began at three different points in Caracas then converged on Avenue Urdaneta, extending a kilometer and half as participants listened to a range of speakers and bands.

Marchers interviewed by national channel VTV expressed repeatedly that they were out marching in order to support the revolutionary process and the Chávez government.

President Hugo Chávez, addressing the large crowd said, "There's no socialism without the working class... solid, conscientious, and committed to what is being born in Venezuela, which is Socialism."

"The happiness and passion in the streets of Caracas [today] and the excellent transmission by [community and government run media] VTV, TeleSur, TVes, Radio Nacional, YVKE Mundial...affected me so much that although it wasn't planned that I would speak today, the enthusiasm motivated me."

Retired army general Melven Lopez said unlike before Chávez's presidency, when May Day was a time of "violent protests against the abuses of capitalism, under the Bolivarian Revolution we celebrate this important day."

However Orlando Chirino, a coordinator of Unete and a leader of the United, Revolutionary, Autonomous, Classist Current (C-CURA), said his current wouldn't participate in either the pro-government or opposition marches because the "government, its ministers, its workers, its political party, its governors and mayors, maintain a brutal offensive against the workers to give up their rights that belong to them as a social class and that they have gained over many years of hard battles," reported Laclase.info.

Examples he cited in which he believes the government has "acted against the rights of unions" included some unfair dismissals, unrenewed contracts, various public sectors who are still negotiating collective agreements, and a "growing criminalization of protests."

Meanwhile, the opposition march clashed with police after some sectors tried to breach barricades set up to mark their route. According to the Bolivarian News Agency (ABN), while the CTV was prepared to follow the approved route, which was specifically designed so that the two marches would not meet or clash, some opposition members called for the march to follow a different route and go to the National Assembly, with opposition TV channel, Globovision, confirming such a route.

When opposition marchers attempted to pull down the barricading fence, the police tried to block them. According to a range of news sources, they were encouraged to break down the fencing and march to the assembly by opposition Metropolitan Mayor, Antonio Ledezma. Photos and video footage also confirm that they damaged a Pdval food distribution point (where the government sells food at solidarity prices).

Police and the National Guard used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the violent sectors. The police and ABN report that such sectors threw rocks and glass bottles at police and that two police officers were injured. Opposition press then carried headlines claiming the Chávez government had repressed the opposition march.

Pablo Castro, a CTV leader and a national leader of the opposition party, A New Time (UNT) said before the march that they were marching "not just for the defense of the rights of the workers but also for all the democratic rights of the country."

In his speech to the other rally that afternoon, Chávez commented on the opposition march saying it was "almost non-existent... The march wasn't workers precisely, but a march of conspirators, and widows of the Pact of Punto Fijo and of capitalism." The Pact of Punto Fijo was a cooperation agreement made between major Venezuelan governing parties in 1958.

Speaking at an event yesterday, commemorating the workers' day and in which 173 workers from various sectors were awarded with medals of the "Work Order of Merit", Chávez also said, "Workers will never again be slaves." He emphasized that its necessary to use education to consolidate the "liberated worker" and that "workers can't be slaves to work" and reiterated his support for the reduction of the working week, one of the proposals in the constitutional referendum of November 2007.

According to Chávez, the unemployment rate (which does not include informal workers) was 7.3% in March, down from 7.4% in February. He pointed out that this is despite the fall in the price of oil, Venezuela's principal export, and compared the statistics to the rest of the world where unemployment is generally increasing.

He also ratified a decision to intervene in a sardine factory in Sucre state and said, "When you all see a private company, a capitalist company that is exploiting workers and not complying with the law...denounce it, as the government is prepared to intervene where necessary." He also emphasized that state companies must be transformed and not operated like capitalist companies.

"They have to be socialist companies where the workers have a fundamental and active role and where the privileges of the managers are no more."

As Chávez announced recently, beginning on May 1st, a 10% increase in the minimum wage will come into effect. Another 10% increase will be implemented later this year. According to Panorama Digital, around half of Venezuelan workers are receiving the minimum wage. Chávez also confirmed yesterday that teachers would receive a wage increase.

3. Asia

Turkey

Ankara



Istanbul



Indonesia



Israel



Baghdad, Iraq

Organized by Iraqi Community Party



Pyongyang, North Korea

Major celebration at the capital of Pyongyang and an evening fire work.



Tokyo, Japan



Beijing, China

May Day in China observe as a 3-days national public holiday.



The Philippines





Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Marxist Party, known as People's Liberation Front, participated in a May Day rally in the capital, Colombo. (Photo: Eranga Jayawardena/Associated Press)



Cypress



4. Africa

Maputo, Mozambique



Togo



Senegal



5. Europe

Riots across Europe fuelled by economic crisis

Tension over the global economic slump have fuelled May Day protests and riots across Europe with trouble breaking out in Germany, Greece, Austria, Turkey and France.

By Henry Samuel in Paris – Daily Telegraph (U.K.)



Workers of ArcelorMittal hold Bengal fires during the annual May Day demonstration in Marseille, France Photo: EPA

Police in Berlin arrested 57 people while around 50 officers were hurt as young demonstrators threw bottles and rocks and set fire to cars and rubbish bins. There were also clashes in Hamburg, where anti-capitalist protesters attacked a bank.

In Turkey, masked protesters threw stones and petrol bombs at police, smashing banks and supermarket windows in its biggest city, Istanbul. Security forces fired tear gas and water cannon at hundreds of rioters and more than a hundred were arrested with dozens more hurt. There were also scattered skirmishes with police in the capital, Ankara, where 150,000 people marched.

The government had declared May Day, traditionally marked by rallies by labour unions, a public holiday this year under pressure from unions.

In Greece, officers fired flash grenades to disperse rioters in Athens after attacks on banks and traffic cameras. Transport strikes disrupted bus, train and ferry services as well as flights by Greek carrier Olympic Airlines.

Twenty people were injured and five arrested after police clashed with demonstrators at a traditional labour day rally in Linz in northern Austria. The incident came after police intercepted some 50 hooded protesters among a procession of up to 700 people at a Communist Party rally.

In France, unions joined forces for the first time since the Second World War, but turnout was not as high as a protest day in March in which up to three million attended 300 rallies against President Nicolas Sarkozy's economic recovery plan.

Some politicians have warned of the threat of "revolution", following radical action such as "boss-napping" factory executives and an ongoing strike that has crippled dozens of French universities.

They are wary of the growing power of leftist radicals linked to the New Anti-Capitalist Party of Olivier Besancenot, a Trotskyist postman.

There were also marches in big cities in Spain, burdened with the highest unemployment rate in Europe. More than 10,000 people gathered in the centre of Madrid in a demonstration organised by the country's two largest trade unions.

In Italy, union leaders shifted rallies from major cities to the earthquake-stricken town of L'Aquila as a sign of solidarity with thousands who lost their jobs after last month's deadly quake.

In Russia, about 2,000 demonstrators gathered by a statue of Karl Marx in Moscow waving banners and red Soviet flags and calling for a return of communism.

In St Petersburg, birthplace of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, police arrested about 120 members far right militants armed with knives and knuckle dusters, police said.

Cuba's ailing former leader, Fidel Castro, chose May Day – a key event in the Communist calendar – to attack Barack Obama, the US President, saying the United States only wanted Cuba to return "to the fold, like slaves."

There has been growing concern among European governments about a groundswell of social unrest and violent street protests that have spread amid the economic downturn.

Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Greece and Iceland all faced social unrest and rioting earlier this year as unemployment soared and countries were forced to impose severe cuts to government spending.

A March summit of European leaders examined the increasing unrest and "intensive sharing of information" has been carried out among key EU governments, including France and Germany.

France

French Unions Lead May Day Protests, Europe Marches

By Heather Smith Bloomberg (U.S.)

May 1 (Bloomberg) -- France's eight labor unions joined for the first time for May Day demonstrations across the country to protest government measures on the economic crisis as insufficient and corporate leaders as out of touch.

"Labor is changing; for the first time in perhaps decades, we are in agreement at the core," said Francois Chereque, secretary general of France's biggest union, Confederation Francaise Democratique du Travail, in an RTL radio interview today. "There is a strong unity among the unions."

Labor unrest is on the rise in France, as seen with "bosnappings," where workers hold company executives hostage to force negotiations on job cuts and plant closings, and demonstrations. In March, as many as 3 million people, or almost 5 percent of the population, marched in 213 protests. A January strike brought out 1.1 million people, according to police, and spurred President Nicolas Sarkozy to meet union leaders and offer more money in the country's stimulus plan.

Today's turnout was better than in May 2008, figures from unions and police show. The Confederation Generale du Travail, or CGT, estimated 1.2 million people marched in 283 demonstrations, according to a report on its Web site. The figure is five times as many as participated in 2008, it said.

National police put the nationwide figure at 465,000, a spokeswoman said. In Paris, of the 65,000 protesters, about 8,500 were foreigners, many focused on the Sri Lankan civil war, she said. There were no arrests or incidents, she said.

The number of French jobseekers rose to the highest level in almost three years in March as companies cut jobs and investment amid the global recession. Unemployment rose 22 percent from March 2008 in the worst recession in the euro region's second-largest economy since World War II.

There's been "a hardening of the positions of corporate leaders," who are refusing to negotiate, Chereque said.

"There are no tangible signs" of recovery, said Jean- Claude Mailly, head of the union Force Ouvriere, in an interview on France2 television today. He said he "fears" the economic crisis will continue and "if we don't change things, we risk it getting worse."

Paris



Marseille



Athens, Greece



Kiev, Ukraine



Russia

Two million Russians take part in May Day celebrations

Praavda (Russia)

About two million Russians took part in May Day celebrations – the day which is now known in Russia as Spring and Labor Day. The press service of the Russian Interior Ministry said that all public events in Russia took place without any serious incidents.

May Day festivities took place in 1,057 cities and towns of the country. About two million people participated in meetings and demonstrations across Russia.

Over 103,000 police officers and 5,000 Interior Ministry servicemen went on duty to guarantee the security of public events.

There were no serious incidents reported during the celebrations of the Spring and Labor Day on May 1, Itar-Tass reported.

May Day occurs on May 1 and refers to several public holidays. In many countries, May Day is synonymous with International Workers' Day, or Labor Day, which celebrates the social and economic achievements of the labor movement. As a day of celebration the holiday has ancient origins, and it can relate to many customs that have survived into modern times.

May Day was celebrated illegally in Russia until the February Revolution enabled the first legal celebration in 1917. The following year, after the Bolshevik seizure of power, the May Day celebrations were boycotted by Mensheviks, Left Socialist Revolutionaries and anarchists. It became an important official holiday of the Soviet Union, celebrated with elaborate popular parade in the centre of the major cities. The biggest celebration was traditionally organized on the Red Square, where the General Secretary of the CPSU and other party and government leaders stood atop Lenin's Mausoleum and waved to the crowds. Since 1992, May Day is officially called "The Day of Spring and Labor", and remains a major holiday in the present-day Russia.



Germany



London UK



Turin, Italy



Warsaw, Poland



Zagreb, Croatia



Spain





Lausanne, Switzerland



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