

May Day Demonstrations Across the World

France :

Nearly 300 protesters have been arrested and dozens of police officers were wounded after rioting broke out during May Day protests in France against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform.

At least 108 police were wounded, 25 in the capital, and 291 people detained across France as violence erupted in several cities on the sidelines of the main union-led marches, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told reporters on May 1.

Protesters clashed with security forces across France on Monday as hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets for Labour Day to vent their anger against President Macron, who last month signed a law to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64, despite months of strikes.

Some 782,000 people protested across France, including 112,000 in Paris alone, the interior ministry said. The CGT union said it counted 2.3 million protesters across France, including 550,000 in the capital.

Cuba :

Cubans rallied on Havana's Malecon waterfront boulevard to celebrate International Worker's Day on Friday, five days after the planned May 1 event was called off due to foul weather and a fuel crisis that has crippled public transport on the island. Thousands of Cubans, many dressed in white, red and blue t-shirts, touting flags and brandishing posters of former leader Fidel Castro, arrived on the Malecon well before sunrise for an event scheduled for 7 a.m.

Turkey :

Hundreds of thousands of workers and youth took part in demonstrations across Turkey for May Day, the international day of unity and struggle of the working class. While tens of thousands of people gathered in Maltepe Square in Istanbul, dozens who wanted to demonstrate in Taksim, the historic May Day square, were violently attacked and arrested by police. Mass May Day demonstrations were held in Turkey's capital and other major cities. Journalists covering the rallies were also detained by Turkish authorities. More than 1,400 miles away, tens of thousands of Turkish citizens protested high inflation in Istanbul. Turkey's largest trade union confederation, the pro-government, with 1.2 million members, organised a rally in Adana which around 6,000 workers joined.

UK :

Trade unions, as well as communist and leftist political parties, organized rallies across Europe on May Day, highlighting the issue of the cost of living crisis generated by imperialist war and profiteering by multinational companies. The resilience of the working class against repression and anti-worker policies was on display, especially in France and the UK, where governments have launched a full-fledged assault on the working class. Teachers in England and their unions, especially the National Education Union (NEU), which already observed a strike on April 27, will go on strike once again on May 2, demanding a fully funded, above-inflation pay raise for teachers.

South Korea :

In South Korea, tens of thousands of people attended various rallies in its biggest May Day gatherings since the pandemic began in early 2020. The two main rallies in the capital, Seoul, were expected to draw about 30,000 people each, according to the organisers. "The price of everything has increased except for our wages. Increase our minimum wages!" and "Reduce our working hours!" are shouted at rally.

Japan :

In Japan, May Day celebrations in Tokyo and elsewhere were held over the weekend without any pandemic-related restrictions for the first time in four years. At Tokyo's Yoyogi park, thousands of labor union members, opposition lawmakers and academics gathered Monday for the May Day event, demanding enough wage increases to offset the impact of rising costs while their lives are still recovering from the damages of the pandemic. Monday's May Day rally was held separately and organized by liberal-leaning groups.

Indonesia :

In Indonesia, rally-goers demanded the government repeal a job creation law they argue would benefit businesses at the expense of workers and the environment. "Job Creation Law must be repealed for the sake of the improvement of working conditions," said protester Sri Ajeng at one rally. "It's only oriented to benefit employers, not workers."

Taiwan :

In Taiwan, thousands of workers took to the streets to protest against what they called the inadequacies of the self-ruled island's labour policies, putting pressure on the governing party ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

Lebanon :

In Lebanon, hundreds of Communist Party and trade syndicate members, as well as groups of migrant domestic workers, marched through the streets of downtown Beirut. The country is in the throes of a crippling economic crisis and spiralling inflation, with some three-quarters of the population now living in poverty.

Pakistan :

In Pakistan, authorities banned rallies in some cities over security concerns. In Peshawar, in the country's northwest, labour organisations and trade unions held indoor events to demand better workers' rights amid high inflation. Similar rallies were also being held and planned later on Monday in several cities across India.

North Korea :

In North Korea, the country's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper published a lengthy editorial urging workers to lend greater support to leader Kim Jong Un, fulfill their set production quotas and improve public livelihoods.

Germany :

Numerous further rallies by labour unions and left-wing groups are planned in Germany on Monday. Protests in Germany kicked off with a “Take Back the Night” rally organised by feminist and queer groups on the eve of May Day to protest against violence directed at women and LGBTQ+ people. Several thousand people took part in the march, which was largely peaceful despite occasional clashes between participants and police.

Sri Lanka :

Sri Lanka’s opposition political parties and trade unions held workers’ day rallies protesting austerity measures and economic reforms linked to a bailout agreement with the International Monetary Fund. Protesters demanded the government halt moves to privatize state-owned and semi-government businesses. Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis in history and has suspended foreign debt repayments.

Spain :

More than 70 marches were held across Spain, led by the country’s powerful unions, who warned of “social conflict” if Spain’s low salaries for the EU average did not rise in line with inflation. They also praised incentives to move Spain to a four-day working week to relieve the strain on workers.

Philippines :

Hundreds of Filipino activists took to the streets in Manila on Monday (May 1) to mark International Workers Day. Activists held banners and chanted slogans at a rally near the Presidential Palace and called on the government to increase the basic minimum wage, protect jobs and treatment of labourers in the country.

USA :

A number of U.S. cities are geared up for May Day (International Workers Day) 2023 with actions that highlighted labor struggles, especially those involving young workers organizing at Starbucks and Amazon. May Day was kicked off Monday, May 1, at Union Square in Manhattan with a march. Political themes include: Stop union busting; support for migrant workers; the working class has no boundaries; and negotiate fair contracts at Amazon, Starbucks, Trader Joe’s, Rutgers University and everywhere.

Canada :

May Day in Canada fell immediately after the conclusion of a strike of over 150,000 federal government workers. This is just a few months after a strike of 55,000 workers in Ontario defied “back to work” legislation, humiliating the right-wing government in the province. The federal worker strike was the largest in Canada in a generation, and shows that the class struggle is beginning to pick up. Comrades from *Fightback*, the Canadian section of the IMT, intervened enthusiastically in this strike and at May Day demonstrations, which blended together in some cities.

Greece :

Thousands of Greek workers, mainly from various leftist parties and trade unions, rallied in the capital Athens to mark May Day. In Greece, tens of thousands of furious demonstrators denounced planned austerity measures needed to secure rescue loans for the country, which is battling a severe debt crisis. Police clashed with protesters in Athens and in the second-largest city of Thessaloniki, where more than 5,000 people demonstrated. The protests come as Greek officials today wrap up negotiations with the European Union and the International Monetary Fund to dramatically cut spending and raise taxes in return for the international loan package, which is worth \$ 60 billion this year alone.