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## **Fast-Food Workers Announce 150-City Strike as Movement Goes Global**

### *Campaign for Higher Pay Spreads to Nearly Three-Dozen Countries on Six Continents*

NEW YORK—U.S. fast-food workers said Wednesday that they will walk off their jobs in 150 cities next week, while workers from dozens of countries on six continents announced they were joining the growing movement for higher pay and rights on the job at restaurants like McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and KFC.

As the US workers strike May 15 for \$15 and the right to form a union without retaliation, workers in 33 countries on six continents will hold protests at McDonald's, Burger King and KFC, outlets, calling for higher pay and an end to abusive employment practices, the workers said Wednesday.

"We've gone global!" said Ashley Cathey, a McDonald's worker from Memphis, Tenn., who makes \$7.75 after six years on the job. "It's amazing that our fight for \$15 and a union has inspired workers around the world to come together. Our campaign is growing and gaining momentum, and the highly-profitable fast-food industry needs to know we won't stop fighting until our voices are heard."

The workers announced the strikes and protests outside a McDonald's in Manhattan, and then delivered a letter to McDonald's that called on the fast-food giant to raise wages and respect workers' rights worldwide.

"On May 15, we will be taking action together around the world to demand that McDonald's — the second largest private sector employer in the world—respect its employees' work," the letter read.

Earlier this week, workers and union leaders from dozens of countries met in New York City for the first-ever global meeting of fast-food workers, organized by the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), a federation composed of 396 trade unions in 126 countries representing a combined 12 million workers.

"The Fight for 15 in the US has caught the attention of workers around the world in a global fast-food industry where workers have recently been mobilizing," said Ron Oswald, general secretary of the IUF. "It has added further inspiration and led them to join together internationally in a fight for higher pay and better rights on the job. This is just the beginning of an unprecedented international fast-food worker movement—and this highly profitable global industry better take note."

In the US, strikes are expected in cities from Oakland to Raleigh, including the first-ever walkouts in Philadelphia, Sacramento, Miami and Orlando. Around the world, workers are planning major protests in at least 33 cities, spanning six continents. Some examples are:

### **Africa**

Morocco: Protests at McDonald's in Casablanca and Rabat

Malawi: Protests at fast-food restaurants

### **Asia**

Japan: 30 protests at McDonald's in 30 different prefectures

Hong Kong: a protest inside and outside a major McDonald's

Korea: a protest at a major McDonald's in Seoul

India: protests at fast-food restaurants in three cities

Philippines: flash mobs inside five McDonald's

Thailand: protests at McDonald's and KFC restaurants in Bangkok

### **Australia and Oceania region**

New Zealand: teach-in by workers at McDonald's corporate headquarters in Auckland

### **Europe**

Belgium: Lunchtime protest at a major McDonald's in Brussels

United Kingdom: Protests at McDonald's in 20 cities

Germany: Protests at Burger King

Ireland: Protests at McDonald's in Cork, Belfast and Dublin

Italy: A national strike at fast-food restaurants in Venice, Milan and Rome, to be held immediately following the US strikes

### **South America**

Brazil: Protests at McDonald's in five states

Argentina: Demonstration at McDonald's in Buenos Aires

### **Central America/Caribbean**

El Salvador: Protest at McDonald's in San Salvador

Panama: Protest at McDonald's in Panama City

Dominican Republic: Protest at McDonald's in Santo Domingo

**McDonald's worker Louise Marie Rantzau, who plans to protest in Denmark, said:** "In Denmark, McDonald's pays me \$21 an hour and respects our union, so I was surprised when I heard workers in the US had to fight so hard for just \$15 and better rights. Fast-food companies need to treat the people who make and serve their food with the same respect everywhere and workers in Denmark are committed to supporting the workers' cause until that happens."

**McDonald's worker Frances Cabrera, who plans to protest in Argentina, said:** "No matter where they live, fast-food workers want fair pay and rights on the job. In Argentina, we've won some rights, but still struggle to get by on low pay. After seeing the courageous actions of American fast-food workers demanding change, we were inspired to join the growing movement."

**Julie Sherry, an organizer with Hungry for Justice, a campaign that started earlier this year to organize fast-food workers, and which plans 20 protests across the UK on May 15 said:**

"Despite the huge profits made by fast-food corporations, the average fast food worker in the UK struggles to survive on just £5 (\$8.50) an hour. McDonald's, the leading player in the UK industry, boosts its mega-profits by forcing 90 percent of its workforce to live on zero-hours contracts, meaning workers have no guaranteed hours, but can be called in to work at the drop of a hat. In the UK, we are at the beginning of a battle to take on the multinationals dominating the fast-food industry, ensure workers know their rights, and open the door to organizing fast food workers into unions, and it's fantastic to be part of a global movement."

A campaign that began in New York City in November 2012, with 200 fast-food workers walking off their jobs demanding \$15 and the right to form a union without retaliation, has since spread to some 150 cities in every region of the country, including the South—and now around the world. The growing call by thousands of workers for \$15 and a union [has been credited](#) with elevating the debate around inequality in the U.S. When Seattle reached a deal last week for a \$15 minimum wage, [Businessweek](#) said the city was "adopting the rallying cry of fast-food workers."

As it spreads, the movement is challenging fast-food companies' outdated notion that their workers are teenagers looking for pocket change. [Today's workers](#) are mothers and fathers struggling to raise children on wages that are too low. And they're showing the industry that if it doesn't raise pay, it will continue to be at the center of the national debate on [what's wrong with our economy](#).

A [recent National Employment Law Project report](#) only added fuel to the fire, finding that low-wage job creation was not just part of our early economic recovery but is a trend that has continued four years into the recovery. The report's author, Michael Evangelist, told the [New York Times](#), "Fast food is driving the bulk of the job growth at the low end.... If this is the reality — if these jobs are here to stay and are going to be making up a considerable part of the economy — the question is, how do we make them better?"

Not only is pay low, but fast-food companies are stealing from workers' paychecks. Earlier this year, workers [filed class-action suits against McDonald's](#) in three states, alleging widespread and systematic wage theft. A [poll conducted by Hart Research](#) found that 89 percent of fast-food workers experience wage theft. McDonald's is being forced to act. In response to the suits, the company said it was conducting a comprehensive investigation; while in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, [McDonald's said worker protests](#) might force it to raise wages this year. With shareholder meeting season upon us, and a [recent report](#) showing the industry has by far the largest disparity between worker and CEO pay, scrutiny on fast-food companies is bound to intensify. New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer has already said, "[Excessive pay disparities pose a risk to share owner value,](#)" and that conversations around inequality should move into the boardrooms of profitable fast-food companies.

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