

# *U.S. Airport Workers Hold Protests*

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New York, January 16 (RHC)-- Airport workers have held rallies in several U.S. cities including New York City to demand higher wages. The rallies, organized by union officials from Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, were part of several protests planned to mark the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

In New York City, about 200 workers rallied outside LaGuardia Airport blocking bus and car drivers on a street bridge leading to the airport. However, the protesters were asked by an organizer to move on after the police warned they would be arrested. "It's very hard not to know if you're going to have money for your daughter," said Gian Lopez, a LaGuardia baggage handler who depends on a \$9 hourly wage, food stamps and rental assistance.

U.S. Representative Charles Rangel, a Democrat from New York, talked to some of the protesters before they began their rallies. Rangel said economic disparities in the U.S. are "a disease" adding: "It's morally wrong to leave those behind that are making America economically strong."

Approximately 100 non-unionized workers walked silently through four terminals of Philadelphia International Airport to a designated "free speech zone." The protesters then held a rally at the zone where they accused contractors of failing to heed minimum wage rules.

According to organizers, similar protests were held at airports in Boston, Massachusetts and Fort Lauderdale in Florida.

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