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With no deal, SF Marriott hotel strike expected to last through Thanksgiving week

Roland Li

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Hospitality workers gather on Market Street last month to protest the hotel chain. With no deal in sight, the strike will continue through Thanksgiving week, a union representative says.

Photo: Jessica Christian / The Chronicle

San Francisco's Marriott hotel strike will last through Thanksgiving week amid a contract dispute, the hotel workers union said Thursday.

The strike began six weeks ago, with 2,500 workers marching in picket lines outside eight hotels as they push for higher wages and lighter workloads.

"Hotel workers and Marriott negotiated late into the night Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday but left without a deal," a spokesman for Unite Here Local 2, which represents hotel workers, said in a statement. "Marriott's proposal doesn't come close to preserving affordable health care, giving us the livable incomes we need to survive, or ending the pain and injury caused by unsafe workloads."

The union plans to meet with Marriott for more talks early next week.

Marriott declined to discuss contract negotiation details.

"We remain committed to negotiating in good faith to reach a fair contract for all parties," a company spokesman said in a statement. He said Marriott pays "significantly above the minimum wage in most markets and provides generous benefits." The union said cleaners in San Francisco make \$45,000 a year, on average.

The 24-hour-a-day protests have led to event cancellations in hotels and reduced services. Marriott and its contractors hired temporary workers who are bused in from hours away. The strike, which spanned eight cities at its peak, is the largest hotel walkout in decades, according to Unite Here Local 2.

On Nov. 2, Oakland hotel workers reached an agreement to end their strike. San Jose workers came to an accord a week later. Unite Here Local 2850, which represents Oakland workers, didn't provide details. Spokesman Ty Hudson told The Chronicle this month that the deal will "allow people to make a living in the extremely expensive Bay Area."

The 24-hour marching has led to complaints regarding noise and inadequate room cleaning from hotel guests on websites such as TripAdvisor. But it's unclear whether the strike is pushing room rates down, said Holden Lim, president of Hospitality Link International, a San Mateo hotel consultant firm.

"I'm sure there's some effects on occupancy and rate," Lim said, adding that data for October aren't yet available. He said the busy fall convention season, which includes events such as Oracle OpenWorld, heightens demand for hotel rooms to one of the highest levels of the year.

Thanksgiving and Christmas tend to be slower for San Francisco travel. While tourists may arrive, there aren't large conventions that pack hotel rooms and conference centers, Lim said.

Striking workers aren't the only labor dispute for Marriott. A temporary hotel worker named Carmelo has filed federal labor charges against Marriott and its Hayward cleaning staffing contractor Environmental Service Partners. He told The Chronicle that he was fired after speaking briefly to a Unite Here Local 2 organizer, which experts have said could be a violation of federal law that protects union activity.

Marriott previously told The Chronicle its contractors must comply with labor law. The charges are "not well founded," said Stephan Barber, an attorney for Environmental Service Partners. He declined to comment further.

Roland Li is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: roland.li@sfchronicle.com Twitter: [@rolandlisf](https://twitter.com/rolandlisf)

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