

Ecuadorean Government Dissolves Right-Wing Backed Teachers Union



Quito, August 22 (RHC)-- The Ministry of Education in Ecuador has announced that the dissolution of the National Union of Educators, or UNE, which is known for its militant protests as well as failing to follow regulations for social organization in the country.

According to the statement published by the Ministry, the UNE has failed to meet regulations set in their statute and bypassed articles of the Regulation for the Operation of the Unified Information System of Social and Civic Organizations.

Minister of Education Augusto Espinosa said the union even failed to register information related to its new directors, a process that is mandatory for any social organization in the country.

The head of the union, Rosana Palacios, said the government's decision is an act of political persecution against the organization. She added that when the Ministry of Education requested information from the directors, many refused to give their names, I.D. numbers and signatures.

But education chief Espinosa said they warned the union for more than two years about its potential dissolvment. "All Ecuadoreans have to respect the law, I don't see why they should have a privilege,"

On July 21st, the Ministry of Education gave the union a two-week limit to present evidence that they did not break the law, a move that could have prevented the dissolution of the union. The final announcement to dissolve the UNE has come a month after the deadline was announced.

However, the UNE rejects the government's decision and have announced plans to radicalize their protests, including plans to organize a strike against the government in Quito on August 25.

President Rafael Correa defended the decision by the Ministry of Education, saying that Ecuadoreans know how the UNE has operated for decades in the country. "In a state of rights, crimes are prosecuted, not people, infractions are persecuted, not institutions" said President Correa on Thursday. "They have never allowed free elections, an arrangement to control the teachers."

The UNE is the largest teachers union, founded in the 1950s, with strong mobilization power that is heavily dependent on political parties such as the Democratic Popular Movement, or MPD. The union organizes frequent strikes against Correa's education policies including more stringent examinations for teachers introduced by the government.

The UNE also organizes marches involving high school students, with many ending in violent clashes with police. The protests usually last for weeks, and paralyze classes in different provinces around the country.

Members of right-wing movements announced their support for the UNE, including Carlos Perez Guartambel, president of an Indigenous organization called Ecuarunari, as well as Cesar Ricaurte, director of Fundamedios, a media organization that allegedly fights for freedom of expression in Ecuador.

Fundamedios declared its support for political organizations and personalities opposed to the government of Rafael Correa and regularly shares content that explicitly opposes the government on matters unrelated to freedom of expression. Both movements are backed by conservative parties and demand the ousting of President Correa.

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