

UN calls on Ecuador to respect right to protest



United Nations, October 8 (RHC)-- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for South America, issued Monday a statement to urge Ecuadorean authorities to respect the right of the citizens to demonstrate peacefully.

As mass protests began last week in the Andean country over a package of economic measures announced on October 2nd by President Lenin Moreno, the OHCHR said that Ecuadorean authorities they should guarantee the right of people to demonstrate peacefully, "protecting their rights to freedom of expression and opinion, and to peacefully participate in the affairs of the country."

"By safeguarding the right to peaceful demonstration, the police have a duty to identify people who act with violence to isolate them from other protesters. The acts of violence or crimes committed by some people should not be attributed to others whose behavior is peaceful," the statement read.

Warning about the violence of the security forces against demonstrators, the U.N. also rejected "the acts of violence committed by other parties including attacks on people, destruction of public and private property, among others damages."

Subsequently, Spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Stephane Dujarric expressed the U.N. chief's support to the OHCHR statement and indicated that the authorities in

charge of maintaining public order must guarantee the right of all persons to demonstrate in peace without risking their lives.

“People should be able to express their opinions and meet peacefully. The use of force must be provided in accordance with international law,” Dujarric said during his daily press conference. For her part, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz expressed concerns about the situation of Ecuadorian indigenous peoples.

In a message on Twitter, Tauli-Corpuz urged the Ecuadorian Government to avoid excessive use of force, respect human rights and seek a negotiated way out of the conflict. The unrest was caused by the introduction of a decree that eliminates the state's subsidies for fuel, among other legislation, to comply with suggestions presented by the International Monetary Fund in exchange for a US\$4.2 billion loan announced on March 11.

Following the first protests on October 3rd, Moreno decreed a State of Exception that is expected to last at least 60 days.

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