

Three Colombians killed and nearly 280 injured during national strike



Bogota, November 22 (RHC)-- Colombia's Defense Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo on Friday admitted that three people died and nearly 280 civilians were injured during the nationwide strike against President Ivan Duque held on Thursday, when some 622 massive marches, rallies or other forms of protest were held in 350 municipalities. He also acknowledged that 53 raids were made, 98 citizens were arrested and another 207 protesters were taken to police stations.

While authorities were trying to justify police repression as a necessary response to halt "the vandals," Colombians uploaded videos and photographs in which the police officers' behavior can be observed.

Among those graphic records of police brutality, for instance, are photographs in which the Mobile Riot Squadron (ESMAD) members hit a woman in her face. There is also a video that shows more than five policemen kicking and beating a couple in downtown Bogota.

In a tacit reference to what happened in Bogota, Manizales, Cali, and Cartagena, which are cities where the population can transmit images more easily, Defense Minister said that the Police authorities have

already opened 11 investigations about allegations of "possible irregularities."????? "Security forces acted with legitimate force", Trujillo insisted and held they helped restore order.

Thursday's national strike was called by the country's main organizations of workers, farmers, students and social activists to express growing discontent with Duque's administration, which has been incapable of stopping corruption and the murder of human rights defenders.

Like what has been happening in other Latin American countries ruled by with right-wing governments, Colombian protests were systematically hidden yesterday by local mainstream media, which used different communication tactics to minimize the magnitude of citizens' discontent.

As a result, social media provided greater and better details of the reasons why a curfew was declared in Cali, a city where residents were not frightened in the face of police repression.

In the coming days, demonstrations are expected to continue with different intensities and modalities. Despite the obvious social and economic costs of his agenda, Duque is still trying to impose his neoliberal policy package, which seeks to eliminate the state-based pension fund, increase the retirement age and hire young people with salaries below the minimum wage.

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