

Colombian Workers' Union calls to carry on nationwide strike into its fifth day



Bogota, November 25 (RHC)-- The Central Workers' Union of Colombia (CUT) called to continue this Monday, with massive protests against right-wing President Ivan Duque and his neoliberal policies, as well as in defense of peace in the South American nation.

"Many sectors of the population continue to demonstrate through the extraordinary cacerolazos [banging of pots], vigils, sit-ins and other creative and peaceful ways of protesting, which we strongly support and invite to join," the CUT said in a statement.

Opposition congressmen and Human Rights organizations submitted an urgent request to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to investigate what they call "violent acts and arbitrary detentions," "stigmatization and criminalization" of the protest, "illegal raids" and "incitement to panic" by the government.

The workers' organization demands that security forces stop the repression and intimidation they use as a strategy against the people and their rights to protest. "Organizers of the national strike were consistent throughout the protest to reject violence, isolate and denounce those who commit acts of vandalism;

which gives us greater authority to reject the repressive and intimidating treatment that the government of President Duque has implemented against peaceful protesters," the union added.

As the strike reached its fifth day, Duque initiated the so-called "great national dialogue" with the elected mayors of major Colombian cities. The president announced talks will be held until March 15, 2020, in a bid to appease certain sectors and political leaders.

The issues that will be covered will regard investment and employment; fight against corruption; education; peace and legality; environmental policies; and strengthening of institutions. However, protesters and organizations continue to strike against the policies implemented by Duque and the resurgence of violence in the country. On November 21, as millions of Colombians, took to the streets to hold the biggest protest against Duque since he came to power in August 2018.

Besides being concerned about his government's little commitment to the Peace Agreements, the population rejects a neoliberal policy package which seeks to raise the compulsory retirement age, increase workers' contributions to the pension system, reduce the state's role in social security, lower the young people's minimum wage, among other things.

So far, however, the right-wing president has failed to consolidate a parliamentary majority willing to approve his proposals, which are often justified as if they were tools to "fight corruption."

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