

# *Guatemalan social organizations denounce massive layoffs*

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Guatemala City, April 19 (RHC)-- Guatemalan Civil organizations and lawmakers denounced massive layoffs during the labor stoppage due to COVID-19. The complainants claim that these suspensions occurred without any action or sanctions by the Ministry of Labor.

Labor sector authorities published decree 140-2020 entitled "Electronic procedure for registration, control, and authorization of suspension of employment contracts," which protects contractors instead of employees. This declaration was issued as part of the "state of emergency" following the outbreak of the virus.

In its content, the decree states that "an executive exhortation was made to the workers, employees and union organizations to effect the suspension of the work contract." On the other hand, it established that for an individual work suspension, agreements must be reached without any kind of pressure. Besides, the decree states that the employer and his legal representatives are responsible for the legality of the documents they submit.

Those who oppose the measure explain that it demonstrates an evident lack of protection for the population against companies, and it aggravates the poverty situation of many workers. Moreover, they classify it as a consequence of the intervention of the organized private sector.

"The labor code contained the suspension of work. Enough social security did not accompany this process," explained Carlos Bezares, a political analyst. For other opponents of the labor decree, it means part of the systemic oppression that condemns workers to poverty even in the worst circumstances.

Furthermore, appealing to the legality of the dismissal process under the responsibility of employers risks the safety and guarantees of the dismissed worker.

The Ministry of Labor has already registered 1400 dismissals after the implementation of the measure. Among the most affected sectors are retail, gastronomy, and services. For those who need to report their layoffs, the entity has made a form for labor reports available on its website through COVID-19: <https://www.mintrabajo.gob.gt/>.

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