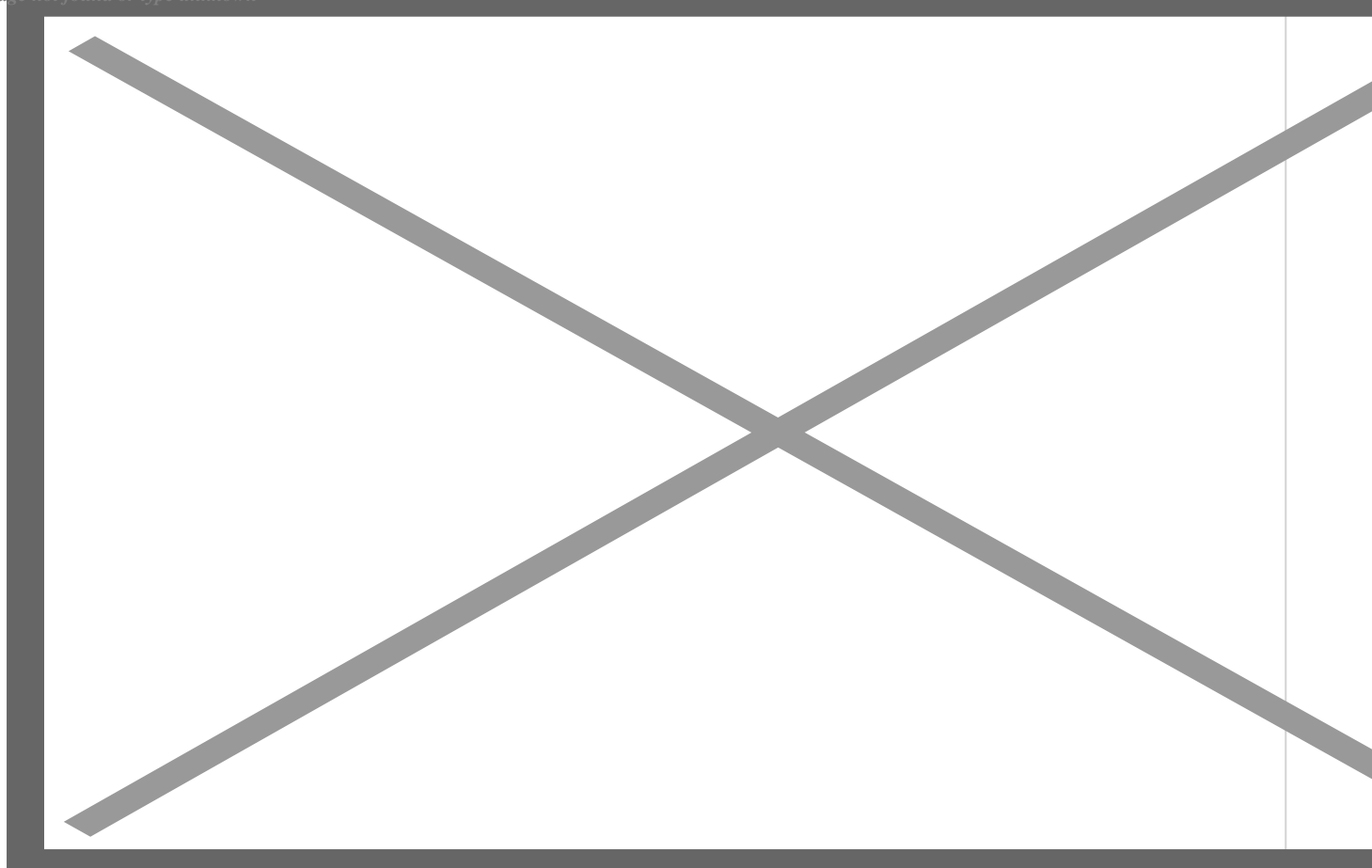


Protesters paralyze Panama, demanding economic justice as cost of living soars

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Protesters in Panama have brought much of their nation to a halt, setting up roadblocks to demand more jobs, relief from soaring food and fuel prices, and an end to official corruption.

Panama City, July 22 (RHC)-- Protesters in Panama have brought much of their nation to a halt, setting up roadblocks to demand more jobs, relief from soaring food and fuel prices, and an end to official corruption.

While Panama's government agreed to lower fuel prices and opened talks with protest leaders over curbing the cost of some food and medicine, demonstrations resumed this week after those talks fell apart.

César Ochoa, a union leader who led recent protests of construction workers in the city of Santiago de Veraguas, told reporters: "After the 1989 invasion, when the gringos intervened in our nation, from that moment, the alleged democracy was installed in our state. But it's a democracy that robs the poor to feed the rich. It's a democracy that has been ruining the lives of all Panamanians."

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