

Political crisis on a stage decorated with white gold



By Roberto Morejon

A political earthquake has hit Portugal, with the resignation of Prime Minister António Costa (pictured), in the context of a controversy over alleged corruption ties that, according to press reports, are related to the management of lithium extraction and hydrogen production projects.

The socialist premier, with eight years of recognized trajectory, said he had a clear conscience and affirmed that the scandal took him by surprise.

The Portuguese drew attention to the swift and swift investigation in several ministries, Costa's own residence and offices of officials, public and private entities.

The process, in which the prosecutors' accusation of the Minister of Infrastructure, Joao Galamba, stands out, covers alleged misappropriation of funds, active and passive corruption of political figures and

influence peddling.

At the center of the judicial and political crossroads is the modality of the delivery of two contracts to extract lithium, a mineral considered key to the energy sector of the future.

It is no coincidence that Portugal has the largest lithium reserves in Europe and is the largest producer on the continent.

As soon as the Portuguese Environmental Protection Agency authorized two lithium mines, environmental groups and a sector of the population expressed their rejection.

To this was added the delivery of a project by the company Start Campus to produce green hydrogen and build a data center in the southern port of Sines.

According to the press, the lithium enclaves are part of the green initiative in the Old Continent, promoted by the European Union, so the events in Portugal are not only national in scope.

Even the lithium mines in northern Portugal are close to the border with Spain, enough for environmental groups to sound warnings from there.

And not least because the region is on the edge of the Gerés-Xurés Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.

It so happens that the interest aroused by lithium in the world clashes with the concern and even alarm of locals, environmental activists and those who want to preserve the landscapes for the sake of tourism.

They reject the lithium fever, the so-called white gold of these times.

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