

Pressure Mounts on Guatemalan President to Resign over Corruption Scandal



Guatemala City, April 27 (NNN-RHC)-- Pressure was mounting over the weekend on Guatemalan President Otto Perez Molina to resign over a corruption scandal that allegedly involved top government officials.

Thousands of protesters gathered in the capital on Saturday yelling "Resign now". They also called for the resignation of Vice President Roxana Baldetti. Protesters blew whistles and banged pots and pans while demanding that the country's top two officials leave their posts and turn themselves over to the courts.

Last week, Guatemalan and international prosecutors announced they had issued arrest warrants for 22 people allegedly involved in a criminal network that took bribes in exchange for reduced customs duties, making millions off the foregone government revenue.

Among those arrested were the current and former heads of Guatemala's tax administration, the president of national newspaper SigloXXI and Baldetti's private secretary, Juan Carlos Monzón. Baldetti and Monzón were in Korea for a ceremony where Baldetti was awarded an honorary degree when prosecutors announced the arrest warrants. In a news conference upon her return, Baldetti said she

had informed Monzón of the charges when she found out and told him to turn himself in. After that, she said, he disappeared.

Protesters on Saturday said Baldetti and President Pérez must have known about the criminal dealings. The protest was organized by a group of citizens via Facebook. More protests are expected in the coming days.

President Pérez, who was on an official trip in eastern Guatemala on Saturday, told journalists that he would not resign. He said his government initiated the investigation that brought the tax fraud ring to light.

“I ask all Guatemalans to act sensibly,” Pérez said. “All have the right to express themselves but we must respect the institutions” that are carrying out the investigations.

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