

Two-Day Strike in Solidarity With Tia Maria Mining Protests in Peru



Lima, May 27 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The southern region of Peru, Arequipa began a 48-hour strike in the early hours early Wednesday in support of the residents in a nearby town protesting against the \$1.5-billion-Tia-Maria-copper-mining project.

A drawn out and bloody demonstration has unfolded in the town of Islay over the last two months, during which at least five civilians were killed, prompting authorities to impose 60 days of martial law .

Strikers gathered in the historic city of Arequipa's *Plaza de Armas* on Tuesday night, before embarking on the shutdown that will continue until Thursday. Authorities have warned those taking part not to bring with them to rallies any objects that could be used for violence, which activists fear means they will not be able to carry banners, flags or musical instruments.

Journalists on the scene in Islay, as *Radio Cable Vision* reported they have been threatened by police, and for the time being are only broadcasting musical programs, from fear of being arrested. Meanwhile, the Regional Office of the United Nations for Human Rights has called for the tensions to be toned down in the region, where some 3,000 policemen and 1,000 military officers have been deployed to deal with the violent demonstrations.

Ministry of the Interior said security forces were authorized to fire on protesters if required. On Tuesday, the Peruvian government ordered the militarization of seven further departments in the south of the country, out of fear of the strike and bloody demonstrations would spread.

Protesters say that the project will seriously damage the environment, including affecting the water table so that the community will be unable to grow its customary crops. The project has also raised concerns in the community due to the health hazards and the history of the Mexican company (*Grupo Mexico* of German Larrea) administering the project, the Southern Copper Corporation.

The mining corporation has been responsible for the pollution of several areas in the Tacna province in the south of the country. Furthermore, the government's environmental watchdog – created in 2008 – has already sanctioned the company on five different occasions for failing to meet standards.

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