

Guatemalan Minister Quits in Wake of Girl Shelter Tragedy



Guatemala City, March 14 (RHC-Xinhua), -- Guatemala's Minister of Social Welfare resigned on Monday in response to public outrage, nearly a week after a tragic fire at a young women's shelter claimed 40 lives.

In an open letter, Carlos Rodas, who took office in November 2016, said he was resigning "to contribute to the objective investigation of the tragedy."

Also Monday, President Jimmy Morales announced his government asked the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation to lend a hand with the investigation into the causes of the fire at the Virgen de la Asuncion Shelter in San Jose Pinula, in the central department of Guatemala.

So far, preliminary reports indicate rioting teenagers set fire to their dormitory mattresses, to protest poor treatment and squalid conditions. The blaze spread and the girls, apparently locked in, were unable to escape.

According to Morales, police have had access to more than one thousand hours of surveillance footage from cameras installed at the shelter to help with the investigation.

Of the fatal victims, 19 died in the fire and 21 at the hospital. Another 18 survivors are still receiving treatment.

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