

Chilean government bows to pressure, returns to talks with striking teachers



Santiago de Chile, July 8 (RHC)-- Striking Chilean teachers met in Santiago with the directors of the school of teachers and the ministry of education Monday.

Minister of Education Marcela Cubillos proposed returning to the negotiation table after trying to pressure the union in giving up their strike. However, the teachers must return to classrooms as a condition for continuing the talks about pending points from the list of their demands.

Cubillos invited the president of the Teachers' Association, Mario Aguilar, to a meeting Monday to propose an "alternative solution" to stop the conflict. Aguilar himself confirmed the meeting and described Cubillos' change of attitude as positive. At the same time, he expressed the willingness of teachers to converse which is the only way to solve the current crisis and not "threats or bravado."

He also hoped that the ministry will come up with concrete proposals to solve the demands of the union. However, he also warned that the meeting does not ensure solutions or recognition of their demands. It also does not ensure the end of the six week long mobilizations which would depend on concrete results and ultimately decided by teachers.

Aguilar said that this is not “eternal, there will come a time when it has to end, but on the basis of concrete solutions to concrete problems that we have raised.”

The teachers' association said they were protesting for structural issues within the country's public system. Its president, Mario Aguilar, explained that there is a huge number of unresolved structural concerns which is why they will remain mobilized. Aguilar assured that this is not a wage claim but a protest to denounce the poor conditions of public education in the country.

"We have raised a petition that has nothing to do with readjustment of wages. We need people to know that we are not in this strike for wage readjustments which is the usual thing in a movement of this kind," he said. "We don't have basic things like bathrooms amenities or pedagogical material, contributions from teachers remain unpaid and payments of salaries and wages are late."

Chilean teachers also insist on the recognition of special education and preschool educators, reform in the middle school curriculum, and the recognition of a historical debt existing since the 1990s.

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