

Puerto Rican judge issues search warrant for governor's home



San Juan, July 23 (RHC)-- Puerto Rican officials on Tuesday were executing search warrants for the mobile phones of Governor Ricardo Rosselló and his top associates amid a corruption scandal that provoked 10 days of protests demanding his resignation and took a toll on tourism.

The warrants target Rosselló himself as well as the phones of his top associates involved in the chat, said Mariana Cobian, spokeswoman for the Puerto Rico Justice Department. She declined to say whether the governor had surrendered his phone.

"A court authorized yesterday search warrants that are being executed today," Cobian said in a statement. "Because it is an ongoing investigation, we will not make additional comments at this time."

The demonstrations drew an estimated 750,000 people to the streets of San Juan on Monday, but the 40-year-old Rosselló has thus far resisted calls to step down. Police fired tear gas to disperse crowds late Monday and early Tuesday.

The publication on July 13 of chat messages in which Rosselló and top aides used sexist and homophobic language to describe female politicians as well as singer Ricky Martin unleashed anger over his handling of devastating hurricanes in 2017, alleged corruption in his administration and the island's bankruptcy process.

Women and LGBTQ people were frequent targets of messages exchanged between Rosselló and his aides in 889 pages of online group chats published July 13 by Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Journalism.

The island's leading newspaper, prominent Democratic officials on the island and in the mainland United States and Republican President Donald Trump have all called on Rosselló to step down.

The protests were also sparked by U.S. authorities' announcement of a federal indictment involving six people, including two former high-ranking Puerto Rico government officials, charged with conspiracy and other crimes in connection with millions of dollars in federal Medicaid and education funds.

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