

Ecuadorean president declares State of Exception amid strong protests



Quito, October 3 (RHC)-- Police repression continues in Quito's historic center Thursday evening where thousands of protesters are marching, trying to gather in front of the Presidential Palace, but blocked by hostile police and tear gas from these militarized authorities.

The peaceful protesters have been met all day with tanks, militarized police and tear gas throughout the day-long protest, but, at the same time, organized protesters that include transport unions, students and other civil society organizations have been able to 'take over' areas of the historic center, say sources on the ground.

The number of people has increased in the afternoon as more and more people leave work and join the protests, according to teleSUR English correspondent Denisse Herrera who is on the scene.

Earlier in the day, Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno declared a state of exception as massive nationwide protests broke out against the elimination of four-decade-old fuel subsidies. This measure allows the police and military to suspend protests and gathering in order to "regain control."

Demonstrations have been taking place across the country, including the nation's most populated city of

Guayaquil, as well as in the southern cities of Cuenca and Azogues.

Amid the massive nation-wide strikes and protests, the Quito-based media outlet, Radio Pichincha Universal, released a video over its Twitter accounting, stating that at just after 5:00 p.m. local time, the electricity of its headquarters in the capital had been cut intentionally by unidentified suspects from the local electric company, they said, who had gotten away by car and motorcycle.

"Radio Pichincha Universal reports its facilities were attacked. At 18h17 we suffered a power outage caused by three subjects who claimed to belong to the @ElectricaQuito," tweeted the media outlet.

In an official announcement, the president and his ministers said on Thursday that their decisions on economic matters are correct for the nation. Moreno said that fuel subsidies are "distortions that caused deterioration to the national economy."

Furthermore, he stated that there are no possibilities to change their minds on "those perverse subsidies that were damaging the country."

Minister of Defense, Oswaldo Jarrin said that the state of exception was established so the police and the armed forces could operate when current order is interrupted and mobility and the development of activities are hindered.

Interior Minister Maria Romo said 19 people were arrested for blocking roads and other crimes, as thousands took to the streets, burning tires and chanting slogans.

Revolucion Ciudadana answered Moreno's measures by publically rejecting the criminalization of social protests. The movement led by former president Rafael Correa called out the National Assembly to face this "antidemocratic decision" by the Government. They also blame the Government for any repression acts against protesters as they are expressing the right to demonstrate against those economic sanctions.

Ecuador woke up this Thursday with a total stoppage of activities as a result of a nationwide strike announced by transport workers and taxi drivers to protest against the "Paquetazo", a package of austerity policies which President Lenin Moreno announced Tuesday in order to comply with suggestions presented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in return for billions of dollars in loans.

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