

More than 50 injured in anti-government protests in Colombia

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More repression in Colombia against protesters

Bogota, June 10 (RHC)-- Thousands of Colombians have taken to the streets in several cities across Colombia to protest against President Ivan Duque's policies and police brutality in the country.

Peaceful protests deteriorated into clashes with police in the capital, Bogota, the northwestern city of Medellin, and other cities around the country after nightfall on Wednesday.

Protests first erupted over proposed tax hikes on April 28 but have since turned into a widespread anti-government uprising, with calls on the government to adopt broader reforms, including on basic income,

and to end police brutality.

The proposed tax increases were dropped, but people have been demanding more supportive public policies to reduce the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has plunged more than 40 percent of the country's 50 million inhabitants into poverty.

During a ceremony to celebrate police promotions, Duque promised to ask the congress to approve the creation of a police human rights directorate, which would seek international help on policy, and a new education directorate for the training of officers.

At least 61 people, mostly civilians but also including two uniformed officers, have died in the protests, according to government figures, though the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) has cited "credible reports" of 68 deaths.

According to Colombian Defense Ministry officials, the protests have also left more than 2,400 civilians and uniformed personnel injured.

In a report on the protests, HRW said it had "documented multiple killings by police, as well as beatings, sexual abuse, and arbitrary detention of demonstrators and bystanders."

A delegation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has been in Colombia to research possible rights abuses during the protests.

Meanwhile, talks between the government and national protest leaders have so far failed to defuse the crisis. The government has insisted that the protest organizers first condemn the roadblocks set up by the protesters, which, over the past six weeks, have caused shortages of food and supplies in the country, particularly in the southwest.

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