

Chilean Teachers Begin Indefinite Strike



Santiago de Chile, June 1 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Chile's largest teachers union announced an indefinite strike on Sunday in protest of a bill currently being discussed in congress. The law, which is part of the educational reform promoted by the government of President Michelle Bachelet, proposes that teachers will reorganize the salary-scale for teachers, while also increasing the time that they have to spend in "non-school hours," including meetings and planning. Teachers who do not fulfill these new rules will be dismissed.

The National Teachers' Union President Jaime Gajardo said they have been in discussion with the government for three months and have demanded talks with the ministry of Education in order to reach an agreement. Gajardo added that teachers are not only demanding decent working conditions, but are also defending public education.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Nicolas Eyzaguirre said he "deeply regrets" the call for an indefinite strike, but said he is open to talk with the teachers. The education crisis in Chile has been at the center of Chilean politics over the past decade, with mass demonstrations and strikes staged by students and

teachers calling for major reforms to the country's infamously expensive and poorly run education system.

The demonstrations have often ended with clashes, and activists charging police with excessive use of force. According demonstrators, the government's promises of free education and an end to private profit in the sector have not been met and they plan to continue demanding reforms to the Chilean education system, which had been steadily privatized by former dictator, General Augusto Pinochet.

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