Ecuadorian Opposition Leaders Meet as Government Supporters Rally

Quito, July 3 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The opposition mayors of Ecuador's two largest cities gathered on Thursday in the economic center of the country, Guayaquil to discuss strategies to adopt around the current protests staged against the president in Quito.

Officially, Quito Mayor Mauricio Rodas and his Guayaquil counterpart Jaime Nebot were meeting just "as every Thursday for two weeks, in order to analyze the country's situation," said Guayaquil's mayor in a press conference held after the meeting. But referring to recent anti-government marches, some of which have turned violent, and on which many are demanding the ousting of the elected President as well as the reversal of taxes on the wealthiest, he added "the cities have expressed themselves, and these demands have to be considered."

As for Rodas, he warned: "if [the Government] do not review [its project], we will call a massive, democratic and peaceful mobilization... once the visit of Pope Francis is over." But Nebot said he will not attend the future marches in Quito because he wanted to avoid the "politicization" of his presence.

Azuay Province's chief Paul Carrasco also attended the event. Supporters of the governing party *Alianza Pais* gathered in front of the city hall during the meeting.

Meanwhile in Quito, President Rafael Correa addressed thousands of supporters after plans came to light that coup plotters had planned to take over the government during opposition marches. A wave of opposition protests, initially only calling for the ending of new tax laws on the wealthiest, have increasingly turned violent, with many demanding the ousting of the Correa government. President Correa announced June 15 the temporary withdrawal of the tax laws and the start of a national dialogue on the future of the Ecuadorean economy.

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