

Campesino Protests Paralyze Half of Guatemala



Guatemala City, May 13 (RHC)-- Thousands of campesinos have blocked roads across Guatemala, paralyzing almost half of the Central American country while authorities warned they would resort to any means necessary to guarantee freedom of movement.

The mobilization is intended to draw attention to the campesino's demands that the government nationalize electricity, stop subsidizing big agribusinesses, and set aside 15 percent of cultivable land lots for basic food production.

Protesters also want the conservative administration of President Jimmy Morales to forbid companies from diverting rivers and other sources of water for profit. The campesinos are also demanding a popular assembly to debate changes to the constitution and are urging the government to stop persecuting human rights leaders.

The National Coordination of Campesinos Organizations and other campesino groups organized the protest on May 5. Campesinos blocked more than 30 important roads for almost nine hours, according to local media, before removing their trucks on some of the roads later in the evening.

The head of the national police, Nery Ramos, declared that he was determined to maintain public order peacefully but had been empowered to use any means required to guarantee the freedom of movement if negotiations failed.

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