

Police Clash with Unregistered Gold Miners in Peru



Lima, March 25 (RHC) – Gold miners have clashed with police in Peru during protests against the government's crackdown on illegal mining operations.

Unregistered gold miners have been protesting in several cities across the country since Saturday, expressing anger over new laws that give thousands of small-scale miners a deadline to register their activities with the government.

On Monday, about 3,000 protesters clashed with police near the Congress building in downtown Lima in a bid to pressure the government to extend the deadline for registering concessions that expires next month, according to footage aired by television station Canal N.

Informal miners also blocked roads in Puno, Arequipa and Ica regions, newspaper El Comercio reported. A woman caught between roadblocks died of a heart attack Sunday, said Daniel Urresti, high commissioner for mining formalization.

The government will press charges against 40 informal mining group leaders and will not agree to talks until the protesters lift the roadblocks, Urresti said.

The new laws, announced by the administration of President Ollanta Humala two days ago, give some 70,000 small-scale miners a deadline for April 19 to register with the government and meet legal standards or face possible imprisonment.

Officials say illegal mining is destroying the Amazon rain forest. Miners, however, believe the legislation could endanger the livelihood of thousands of families. The miners accuse the government of treating them like criminals.

Peru is the sixth largest producer of gold in the world. Much of that production, however, comes from illegal operations.

Illegal mining is reportedly present in 21 of the 25 provinces of the country.

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