

Honduran Military Police shoot students on university campus



Tegucigalpa, June 26 (RHC)-- In Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, more than 40 military police violently entered the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) campus as they chased student protesters.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Office (OHCHR) in Honduras expressed "its deep consternation" at the incidents that occurred in Tegucigalpa, noting that the armed incursion left at least four students injured.

"Exceptional circumstances such as internal political instability or any other public emergency situation cannot be invoked to justify the violation of basic principles on the use of force," the OHCHR said in a press release.

The organization also pointed out that international and national standards on the use of force indicate that the use of "firearms and legal force are the last resort when all less harmful means have failed, in the face of an effective and direct threat against the life of the police themselves or a third party."

"Armed with shields, vests and automatic firearms, the military police entered through one of the UNAH main gates, chasing those who had thrown stones at them. At least two automatic rifle capsules were scattered on the site... the identity of the wounded college students and the exact number of injured was

unknown," El Periodico reported.

The UNAH rector Francisco Herrera also raised a strong complaint about the actions deployed by the Honduran security forces. "I want to be categorical. At no time, we as university authorities authorized the entry of the police," said Herrera who added that "we felt powerless and angry to see how our campus was invaded."

The military police assault on the UNAH occurred in the context of massive protests that have been taking place since April against President Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) and in support of the Platform for the Defense of Healthcare and Education, an organization which has brought together doctors and teachers who reject the privatization of health and education services.

In the past week, the national police troops joined the civilian demonstrations and refused to repress the citizens, which made the Honduran government deploy the military to the streets.

Later, on June 21st, President JOH welcomed the arrival of the U.S. Southern Command head Craig Faller and 300 U.S. Marines who landed at a military air base near the country's capital. According to the official version, U.S. Marines are in Honduras to run humanitarian assistance projects and build elementary schools.

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