

Violence Rages in Turkey Over Coal Mine Explosion



Istanbul, May 15 (RHC)-- Anger is boiling in Turkey over the government's handling of a deadly coal mine explosion in the country's western city of Soma. Tensions were high as a large number of relatives and miners gathered outside the mine's entrance on Wednesday.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived at the site of the mining disaster that has claimed at least 274 lives so far. Protesters attacked Erdogan's car in Soma during his visit. They accused the government of not doing enough to rescue those still trapped in the mine. Similar protest rallies were held in Ankara and Istanbul. Police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse the protesters.

Turkey's biggest union, the Public Workers Unions Confederation (KESK), declared a one-day strike on Thursday over the explosion. Union officials say mining incidents have increased in Turkey following the privatization of the sector. They have also called for a public response to the disaster.

Allegations of negligence against the Turkish government over safety conditions have escalated as an electrical fault at the mine the day before caused a collapse.

Lignite coal mining is a major industry in Turkey's Soma. A similar incident in 1992 marked one of the country's worst mining disasters in which 263 miners were killed near Zonguldak, on the Black Sea.



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