

# *Guatemalan Prisoner Sews Mouth Shut to Protest Sentence*

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Guatemala City, January 20 (RHC)-- A prisoner in Guatemala sewed his lips together to protest a court decision that refused the reduction of his sentence, which he has been serving since 2013.

Ruddy Esquivel, prison spokesman, said that Ruben Estuardo Tobar Ramirez has been on a hunger strike since last Thursday. Health workers found his mouth sewn shut the following day when they came to check on his health. He said that Tobar Ramirez has a stitch on the right side and two on the left.

Tobar Ramirez is serving a six-year sentence for money laundering and has refused healthcare. The prison where he is being held has 4,774 prisoners despite a stated capacity of 1,200.

The prisoner began the strike when he was denied a sentence reduction because he was unable to pay a \$500,000 fine, according to court documents. Tobar Ramirez said in a letter that he will blame the government and prison system for any damage to his "physical integrity" and that the fine is ""exaggerated and unpayable." He also attacked the system for its lack of reintegration programs and high overcrowding rates.



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