

Argentinean Unions Announce Largest Protest Since Macri Took Office



Buenos Aires, March 2 (RHC)-- Argentinean unions and social organizations, including workers, teachers and women, have called for a mass three-day protest against the government of President Mauricio Macri in what's set to be the largest demonstration against the administration since it took office 15 months ago.

Macri returned to Argentina from a trip to Spain, where he held meetings with King Felipe VI and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and also delivered a speech in Congress. Members of the leftist party Podemos criticized Macri's visit, and one lawmaker greeted him with a shirt demanding the release of Milagro Sala, the Indigenous activist and lawmaker who was dubbed the first "political prisoner" of Macri's administration when she was arrested after a protest in January 2016.

Teachers from all over the country will skip work and strike on March 6th and 7th — the first days of the school year — to protest wage disputes that have not been resolved with the administration. They will also be joined by General Confederation of Labor, or CGT, one of the largest trade unions in the country. Then on March 8th, International Women's Day, organizations will join the march to demand respect for women's rights and a stronger fight against femicide in the country.

The country's main unions have decided to end a truce they had with the government since December 2016, following the rise of inflation to more than 40 percent. Hector Daer, a lawmaker and leader of the CGT, said other strike threats were never realized despite the fact that key demands and agreements were not reached with the Macri government.

"There was never a honeymoon (with the government) because we were never married. We are not part of this project nor do we agree, but we are respectful of democracy and what most of the citizens voted for," said Daer. "It is not us who kill hope. The commitment that had been assumed is not being fulfilled."

One of the government's first actions was to meet with unions and other collectives to ask them for patience and promise them that growth benefits would soon be available to all. The CGT also announced a national strike during the second week of March. Former President Cristina Fernandez asked her supporters to attend the marches. Argentina also faces an election year, with legislative elections that will take place mid-October.

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