

Colombian teachers to strike against violence, poor conditions



Bogota, July 19 (RHC)-- Colombia's National Federation of Educators (Fecode) has announced they will hold a national strike next Wednesday, July 25th, to demand government action against the violence of paramilitary groups that are targeting teachers, as well as a greater budget to improve access and quality of education.

"Violent groups are murdering teachers and intimidating educational workers in different regions of the country. Guarantees to the security of teachers and social campaigns to promote schools as areas of peace are urgent," Fecode's press release states.

Colombian teachers have denounced that many of them are facing death threats for having supported former presidential candidate Gustavo Petro. "It is their constitutional right to have a political choice in a presidential proposal, but this cannot be motive for persecution or acusaciones," Fecode said. They have also called on parents and student representatives to join the protest.

Bogota's District Association of Educators announced they will join the strike to condemn alleged acts of corruption in the budget for the school feeding program. "The protests in education centers continue due to the deficiencies in infrastructure, school transport, (and) lack of investment," Fecode claimed, urging the government of Juan Manuel Santos to fulfill his commitments before leaving office.

The government and teachers signed an 24-point agreement in June 2017 after a 37-day strike. According to the federation only eight of the commitments have been met. The others, including an increase in the education budget, elimination of pay gaps, and improvements in their health services and national fund for social services remain pending.

This is the federation's third strike this year. The first was organized on February 21st, when they denounced the poor health service for educators, and the second took place in May, when they protested the government non-compliance with their agreements.

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