

Colombian teachers and students begin national strike



Bogotá, October 24 (RHC)-- The Colombian National Federation of Education Workers (Fecode) has begun a 24-hour national strike as several teachers and one student continue their hunger strikes.

Teachers and students in at least seven cities around Colombia are protesting a lack of resources for public schools. Professor Adolfo Atehortua, former director of the Pedagogical University, has ended a nine-day hunger strike saying that the Ministry of National Education is inviting dialogue.

"We are ahead of a definitive moment. The government is trying to obstruct the movement," Atehortua said. "We have to push for dialogue but on top of everything, we need to put aside the differences and work for unity. The university movement and public higher education deserve this."

Professors Juan Carlos Yepes, Luis Fernando Marin, and student Jose Leonardo Yoldy will continue their hunger strike which has reached approximately 216 hours so far.

Marches are taking place in Bogota, Bucaramanga, Cartagena, Medellin, Cali, Armenia, and Valledupar. One of several demonstrations this year, the strike's aim is to pressure the Colombian government to invest more in public education.

Protesters, including teachers and students, are demanding that the government comply with agreements

that were signed in 2017. The agreement came after a month-long national teachers' strike. It would increase salaries, expand the number of classrooms, improve classroom resources, and provide further education opportunities for teachers.

The president of the National University of Colombia, Bogota, announced that the university needs 60 billion pesos, around \$20 million, in order to complete the 2018 academic year. More than 50,000 students attend the university and 6,000 professors and employees work there.

In other parts of the country, 32 public universities are in need of 1.8 trillion pesos in order to continue their operations.

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