

Police repress farmers and Indigenous in Paraguay

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Asunción, October 1 (RHC)-- Farmers and Indigenous people in Paraguay were repressed this Thursday for the second consecutive day by police agents, in the framework of protests in rejection of the approval by Congress of a law that criminalizes the occupation of land.

Protesters gathered for the second day outside the Legislative branch headquarters, in the capital Asunción, to demand that the country's president, Mario Abdo Benítez, veto the law, when they were assaulted by the police force.

The Chamber of Deputies approved on Wednesday -- with 49 votes in favor and three against -- a bill which increases land occupations and invasions to up to ten years in prison, which was endorsed by the Senate last week.

The demonstration that took place on Wednesday in rejection of the bill outside the Congress was harshly repressed by police agents, resulting in the wounding of 19 indigenous people.

Peasant and indigenous organizations repudiate this new law because they affirm that it seeks to criminalize the struggle for the right to land.

During the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, from 1954 until 1989, farmers and Indigenous people lost millions of hectares of land to the military regime, which handed these properties over to landowners.

Throughout these years, Indigenous people have seized several lands as a way of reclaiming that theft of their properties. The Indigenous leader Derlis López, who was detained on Wednesday for a few hours, warned: "We are going to come massively in case the law is promulgated (by President Abdo Benítez). We are not going to be silent anymore."

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