

Puerto Rican Teachers Strike Over School Closures



San Juan, June 22 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Puerto Rico's teachers union went on strike Saturday to protest the closure of 63 schools as part of education cuts, which were undertaken to save money as the country experiences economic crisis.

The affected students also participated in the rally against the Education Ministry's policy that leaves dozens of teachers out of work for the next term beginning in August. "This is detrimental to education, because the necessities of the community, the investment in infrastructure in recent years, the technology, have not been taken into consideration, and neither the parents nor the teachers have been consulted," said Mercedes Martinez, trade union leader. She added that the schools they have decided to close are in the poorest areas of Puerto Rico, which makes it even more difficult for students to find private alternatives to get their education.

Martinez said that this measure of closing the schools in Puerto Rico corresponds to criteria imposed from the United States, who "are cut off from the reality of the country, as they try to eliminate the schools with special programs, as well as to close others that exceed the minimum students required, with the aim of passing them to another school and applying a supposed plan of economic cuts and improvement," she said.

She insisted that the U.S. is also behind the measure of firing teachers and the elimination of specialized materials that are necessary for adequate academic training.

Since 1952, Puerto Rico has had the status of “Associated Free State.” Although in theory Puerto Rico self-governs, Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and the power to exercise their sovereignty falls to the U.S. Congress.

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