

Thousands of Students Protest Education Reforms in Honduras



Tegucigalpa, July 11 (RHC-teleSUR), -- Thousands of Honduran students poured into the streets in the capital city of Tegucigalpa Sunday to protest the government's efforts to privatize higher education.

The “mega-mobilization” for “public, free, and inclusive” schools followed a protest in June when students occupied for nearly a month the national public university, known by the Spanish acronym, UNAH. Protesters Sunday reiterated their core demands to end neoliberal reforms on campus, make university spending more transparent, and create elected student representative positions in the university’s governing structures.

Protesters also called for an end to the criminalization of the movement and for university officials to drop charges leveled against 75 students for sedition, vandalism, and other crimes.

Demonstrators carried signs with slogans such as “UNAH I want you public” and many protesters wore balaclava-style masks over their faces, an image that has become the iconic symbol of the surging student movement.

Students occupying university buildings were evicted on July 1 after shutting down parts of the university for nearly a month. The movement criticized authorities for responding with militarized force to calls for more dialogue.

Protests and sit-ins have also taken place in recent weeks at other Unah locations across the country, namely the campus in the second largest city of San Pedro Sula where students plan to march on Monday at 4:00 p.m. local time.

The movement has slammed Unah Rector Julieta Castellanos for acting unilaterally and taking “arbitrary” decisions, such as the cancellation of the next academic term in over a dozen departments as a result of the protests.

UNAH students also took to the streets last year to protest government corruption and demand the resignation of President Juan Orlando Hernandez, whose conservative government has overseen a wave of neoliberal reforms.

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