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Guatemala: Strikes, Work Slowdowns Underway To Protest Government Economic Policies

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As of Aug. 19, workers in 16 of Guatemala's 22 departments were engaged in or organizing strikes and work slowdowns to protest the government's economic policy. The Coalition of Trade Unions and Popular Action (UASP) is primarily responsible for organizing the protest. Among the strikers' major demands are reduced prices for fuel, public transportation and subsistence goods; and, an end to military harassment of workers in urban and rural areas. Guatemalan unions and civic organizations continue to report incidents in what they describe as an escalation in human rights violations. Hundreds of rural workers are now refusing to participate in the military's "civilian defense patrols." The patrols were created and organized by the Army to ensure military control of designated rural areas. Soldiers and paramilitary groups have frequently used the patrols for assassination, torture and disappearance of rural residents accused of "subversive" actions or attitudes. (Basic data from Prensa Latina, 08/19/88)

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