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Barbara Khol

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Peru: Striking Public School Teachers Reject Salary Hike Offer

by Barbara Khol
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On Aug. 1, Jose Ramos, secretary general of the United Education Workers Union (Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Educacion-SUTEP), told reporters that if union members accept pay hikes offered by the government, teachers would return to the classroom the following Monday. As of Thursday, the nation's 260,000 public school teachers had been on strike for 100 days. The government offer, presented by Education Minister Oscar de la Puente, consists of a salary floor of about $118 per month (95 nuevos soles), and a ceiling of $183 (147 nuevos soles). Ramos said the minister also agreed to annul a decree suspending school principals and assistant principals throughout the country if teachers suspend the strike by Monday. Meanwhile, strikers continued street demonstrations, blocking traffic with street barricades and burning tires. Police continued dispersing crowds with water cannon, tear gas, and clubs. Local news sources reported that during a clash with police in Ayacucho, 10 teachers were injured and many more were arrested. The salary hike for teachers would be financed via an increase in the general sales tax (IGV). The tax hike must be approved by the national congress. On the evening of Aug. 4, a majority of SUTEP members voted to continue the strike. According to Ramos, refusal to return to work was justified because the government had failed to release paychecks for the month of July. (Basic data from AFP, 08/01/91, 08/05/91)

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