

200 Students take over Catholic offices to protest education law

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Quito, Ecuador--Around 200 high students invaded and took over the Roman Catholic headquarters in Quito on January 5 to protest a new law which mandates the teaching of religion in all of the country's schools. The students, from Colegio Mejia (Mejia High School), took over the Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference offices peacefully and held the building for 30 minutes.

The legislation was originated by the Episcopal Conference.

Over 80 police negotiated with the students who gathered nearby after leaving the building. Other protestors demonstrating at the nearby Central University against a recent rise in bus fares showered the students and police with rocks.

Meanwhile, Anglican archbishop Walter Crespo continued his hunger strike which he began on January 1 to protest the new law. Crespo said he was feeling fatigued after six days of the fast. The 45 year old bishop said he was not following his doctors orders to drink two liters of water and eat three caramel candies per day. He said he was drinking two glasses and eating one piece of candy.

Crespo was keeping up a limited schedule of activities, including leading two services per week.

Crespo carried out a hunger strike in the United States in 1986 in defense of immigrant rights. One of Crespo's two children was expected to visit him in Ecuador in early January to observe his current action.

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