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Puerto Rico

The struggle for public education continues in the UPR

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San Juan, Puerto Rico- After 70 days of strike and hours of deliberation under the unmerciful Caribbean sun, the students of the Rio Piedras Campus, of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) approved a plan of action to continue wielding their struggle for public education.

The plan of action approved by about 2000 students in a general assembly not only includes a 48 hour strike that is to shut down the campus beginning today, and a 24 hour work stoppage that is to affect the UPR administration directly. But also a National March Against Tuition Hikes, the 11th of March, that is also the day of International Solidarity with the UPR, in which simultaneous demonstrations in solidarity with the UPR will be held in cities around the world including Amsterdam, Madrid, Barcelona, Manchester, New York, Chicago and Boston, among others. The students also approved cultural activities which include an uninterrupted reading and representation of Gabriel Garc a-Marquez's novel, *Cien A os de Soledad*. After all of this is done, students will evaluate the situation in order to decide about future actions in another assembly.

Last Spring UPR students won a two-month strike against fee hikes, budget cuts and privatization. They went on strike again on December 14, 2010 against an \$800 tuition increase that has forced thousands of students out of school. University officials tried to stop the strike by calling in riot police to occupy UPR's campuses and by expelling student leaders. This resulted in police brutality and more than two hundred arrests. Demonstrators have been forced off campus and have faced tear gas, police beatings.

Still, the student movement defied these police-state tactics boycotting their classes, organizing roadblocks and massive protests in the streets, in malls and commercial areas. They also mobilized student rallies in nearby barrios armed with music, information and the simple message "Our struggle is your struggle!"

A week ago, amidst massive student demonstrations, along with the support of labor unions, religious, and communitarian groups, the President of the UPR Administration presented his resignation, and the police had to be removed from university grounds.

This has been the second strike in less than a year to defend public education for the working class.