



Protest



19

DEC
5:56 UTC

Panama Tactical: Multiple labor unions slated to march against Bill 163 to Asamblea Nacional in Panama City at 09:00 (local time) on December 20; allot for disruptions

Current Situation

- Multiple labor unions, including the Confederacion Nacional de Unidad Sindical Independiente (CONUSI, confederation of independent trade unions), and the Sindicato Unico Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Construccion y Similares (SUNTRACS, the construction workers union) will hold a protest march in Panama City on December 20.
- Activists will gather in Parque Belisario Porras at 09:00 (local time) and proceed for a march towards the Asamblea Nacional (AN, the National Assembly).
- This protest march is being organized to oppose the introduction of Bill 163, proposed by the Executive, which seeks to reform Law 51 of the Caja del Seguro Social (CSS, the Social Security Fund), a social security institution that provides pension, healthcare and other benefits to public workers. The government's proposed reforms include increasing the retirement age to 60 for women and 65 for men, introducing greater flexibility in pension systems, and offering a broader range of retirement plan options, among other measures.
- In addition, the upcoming protest will also mark the 35th anniversary of the US invasion of Panama, which began on December 20, 1989.



Source: [Confederacion Nacional de Unidad Sindical Independiente](#)

Assessments & Forecast

1. The call to protest follows the conclusion of citizen consultations on Bill 163 on December 18 and coincides with the commencement of deliberations in its first debate on December 19. Political parties such as the ruling party Realizando Metas (RM) and the Movimiento Otro Camino seek to expedite the legislative process, to ensure that the initiative is approved before December 31, when the extraordinary sessions of the Legislature conclude. Conversely, Pueblo Unido por la Vida, an umbrella organization of major labor unions and civil society organizations, demands the rejection of the project, arguing it fosters privatization through individual accounts and inadequate pensions. Independent MPs from the Vamos coalition have requested postponing the debates to next year, citing pressure from social and business sectors for more thorough deliberation.
2. Labor unions such as CONUSI, SUNTRACS, and Asociacion de Medicos, Odontologia y Profesionales Afines de la Caja de Seguro Social de Panama (AMOACSS) have held associated protests in the past two months in Panama City including on October 17 and most recently on December 12, both drawing a turnout in the high hundreds-to-low thousands. Both protest actions transpired peacefully. However, temporary blockades were reported along the march route.
3. **FORECAST:** Considering the social media traction on the protest call, recent precedent, coupled with the fact that the march will follow preliminary deliberations over the bill, with the ruling party leaning towards passing the reform, the slated march is likely to draw a high turnout in the low-to-mid thousands. In addition, with the debates on the bill expected to continue in the coming weeks, associated protests are expected to recur outside the AN, albeit with relatively lower turnouts in the low-to-mid hundreds. Precedent suggests that the protest is expected to transpire without any instances of unrest. Nonetheless, a bolstered security presence can be expected along the route of the march, to monitor the proceeding and divert traffic. Consequently, significant disruptions to vehicular and pedestrian traffic can be expected in the vicinity of Parque Belisario Porras and the AN from the morning hours onwards, on December 20.

Recommendations

Those operating or residing in Panama City on December 20 are advised to allot for disruptions to traffic due to the slated march from Parque Belisario Porras to the Asamblea Nacional during the morning hours.