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## Inflation Spikes Under Mauricio Macri, Affecting the Majority

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The economic measures implemented in the last two months by neoliberal and conservative right-wing President Mauricio Macri's government have caused inflation to spike by about 30 percent, mainly in basic consumer goods.

For example, the price of meat has climbed from US\$6 to US\$9 per kilogram, which is especially grave in a country that has the highest rate of red meat consumption per capita in the world.

Two weeks ago, Energy Minister Juan Jose Aranguren announced an increase of about 600 percent in electricity tariffs. The rise in electricity bills, according to Aranguren, would affect about 70 percent of users.

Macri heavily criticized previous socialist President Cristina Fernandez and her husband, former President Nestor Kirchner, of not being able to control inflation, an issue he has not been able to put under control after two months in office.

Instead, Macri's government officials have blamed the runaway inflation on their predecessors, saying it is a consequence of the policies carried on before they took office. In the meantime, the people of Argentina are anxiously awaiting results.

For now, the Macri administration is apparently expecting to calm people down with their creation of an application for smartphones through which consumers can compare prices from different supermarkets and discover who has the lowest prices.

However, experts believe that the main problem lies in the lack of regulation of the excessively high profit margin that big businesses currently enjoy, and that the policies the government is carrying out are far from alleviating the true problem: inflation.

"If you look at the economic policies they put in place ... they are all aimed at transferring resources to the

corporate sectors, and there isn't one that is aimed at protecting the most vulnerable sectors of society, which are workers and consumers," Economist Agustin D'Atellis told teleSUR.

He also explained the measures implemented by the Macri government have not only sparked inflation in January and February, they have also triggered what he called an "inflationary inertia" that would be difficult to stop.

Opposition groups have pointed out that the government is failing to confront speculative sectors — local franchises of multinational supermarket chains — who are raising prices to increase their profit margins.

Workers are also facing the consequences of currency devaluation, which has caused the minimum wage to lose purchasing power as it has gone from US\$600 in August to US\$432 in January.

And again, the only ones benefiting from devaluation are the wealthiest sectors of Argentina, such as agribusiness, who will see an estimated US\$3 billion in exports throughout 2016.

Today, it is clear who are the winners and losers of the neoliberal comeback under Macri's administration.

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