

Argentina: Congress, Supreme Court and People All Against Macri

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Macri's government is facing the strongest opposition to his term so far as his neoliberal policies start to seriously affect Argentines' daily lives.

While social movements are preparing massive protests for Thursday, the country's Supreme Court demanded Monday that the government of Mauricio Macri justify within 10 days the "social and economic aspects" of the [400 percent rise in gas bills](#).

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The country's highest court was solicited by a federal court in La Plata, which decided Thursday to suspend all bill increases, saying the government failed to implement the required public audits before imposing the price hike in April.

As a result, Macri's conservative government was forced to promise Monday that the price rise would hopefully be maintained under 400 percent, without being able to confirm it.

On the initiative of the opposition block Justicialist Party Front for Victory, both chambers in Congress announced measures in order to supervise the government's controversial move.

Senators approved a bill asking the government to suspend the rise of gas bills until the case brought to the Supreme Court was solved, while representatives called a special session over the matter.

Meanwhile, civil society also mobilized Tuesday, while social organizations, consumers associations and opposition groups organized another massive political protest for Thursday, calling for a "cacerolazo," in order to reject Macri's policies.

Former businessman Macri cut energy subsidies and [hiked power rates](#) shortly after taking office last December.

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Macri said the decision, which raised tariffs by more than 1,000 percent in some places, "still pains me."

"All transitions are hard," Macri said in a speech marking the country's bicentennial independence day celebration.

"Let's learn to consume the least amount of energy possible," Macri said, from the northern province of Tucuman, the cradle of Argentina's independence, touting the environmental benefits of doing so.

By sharply devaluing the peso by more than 25 percent, loosening price controls and hiking utility rates, Macri has sent inflation surging. Prices have risen more than 6 percent in Buenos Aires this month, private economists estimate, putting basic living costs out of reach for more families.

As a result, nearly 33 percent of Argentines now live in families unable to afford the family basket and other basic goods, up from 29 percent at the end of 2015, according to researchers at the Catholic University of Argentina.
