

Chileans march to honor victims of Pinochet dictatorship



Santiago de Chile, September 10 (RHC)-- Tens of thousands filled the streets of Santiago de Chile on Sunday during a march in solidarity with the victims from the Augusto Pinochet era, a 17-year dictatorship which began on September 11, 1973.

Beginning in the Plaza de los Heroes, the participants marched through the capital city to the General Cemetery where a memorial for victims of the fascist coup was honored with wreaths of flowers and speeches.

Protesters called for an end to impunity, carrying signs with the words: "45 years after the military coup, we are still fighting for truth and justice." Members of the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared Detainees held photographs of the missing victims.

As is traditionally the case, the demonstration on the anniversary of the September 11th coup triggered clashes between protesters and the police.

At the march in Santiago de Chile, Mapuche representatives from the Machi Celestino Córdova Support Network denounced the recent rounds of arrests targeting the native people with calls for justice during the protest for victims.

"The dictatorship continues to be a present element for our people... In these 28 years of this pseudo-democracy our people have been made invisible," one indigenous protester told Dragnic.

In June, right-wing President Sebastian Piñera issued a pardon for former colonel Rene Cardemil who had been sentenced to 10 years in prison for executing six people in October 1973.

Weeks later, the Supreme Court granted conditional release to a group of former military agents, including soldiers Jose Quintanilla Fernandez, Hernan Portillo Aranda, and Felipe Gonzalez Astorga, and police officer Manuel Perez Santillan, all convicted of crimes against humanity. Those released were slated to serve until 2020 or 2023.

During the demonstration Sunday, Alicia Lira, president of the Association of Relatives of Executed Politicians accused Piñera of conspiring with various Supreme Court judges and leading a nationwide "impunity campaign."

"Seeing the president of the Supreme Court meet with Piñera, who has a commitment to military condemned for human rights violations, really shows that here there is no will of the state powers to do justice," she said, adding that president's actions of late are an insult to the memory thousands of Chilean victims killed during the dictatorship 45 years ago.

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