

Chileans Protest in Santiago in Support for Mapuche Prisoners



Santiago de Chile, September 28 (RHC)-- Over 2,000 demonstrators protested Chile's capital Santiago to support four Mapuche Indigenous community members who have been on hunger strike for 115 days. Chanting the main motto "for the dignity of the Mapuche people," the demonstrators marched down major thoroughfares in Santiago de Chile, lit fires in the street and blocked traffic for evening commuters, but also in other cities of the country. Police used water cannons to break up the demonstrators.

Chile's largest native ethnic group, the Mapuche, who live mainly in the Temuco area of southern Chile, have been in a struggle with the government as they try to regain land lost during Chile's 19th-century expansion southward into the Mapuche-held territory.

The hunger-striking members of the Mapuche community are accused of arson attacks in southern Chile. The sentence applied a controversial anti-terrorism bill passed during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

The prisoners have lost between 15 and 22 kilograms, according to a medical expert sent to the prison, presenting symptoms including a deterioration of cognitive functions.

On Thursday morning, it was announced that one of the four hunger strikers has been taken to a hospital after internal bleeding was discovered.

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