

Protests erupt in Chile after police fatally shoot street juggler

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Building burns during a protest after police shot a street juggler in Panguipulli, Chile. (Photo: Andres Quezada/Reuters)

Santiago de Chile, February 7 (RHC)-- Protests have broken out and municipal buildings were set on fire in southern Chile after police shot dead a street performer, prompting an emergency government meeting.

The shooting took place on Friday in Panguipulli, a popular lakeside resort around 800km south of the capital Santiago, prompting hundreds to take to the streets in protest. Some protesters erected burning barricades and threw rocks at police, while public buildings, including the municipal headquarters, were set on fire.

Chilean police have detained the officer involved in the shooting while their investigation proceeds, according to officials. Interior Minister Rodrigo Delgado, who convened his staff on Saturday to discuss the situation, condemned the arson and promised justice would be served in the shooting.

The Chilean government has ordered police to hand over all records of the incident to the Public Ministry, which has launched an investigation.

Wider protests since late 2019 have put the country's Carabinero police force under intense scrutiny, with local and international watchdog groups alleging excessive use of force and human rights violations.

The shooting occurred after the juggler refused to cooperate with a police search by two uniformed men, the AFP news agency reported. The check resulted in a dispute that ended with one of the agents firing at the street artist, according to a video widely circulated by local channels and on social media, the news agency said. "We regret the loss of this young juggler. I hope that justice is done," Ricardo Valdivia, Panguipulli's mayor, told Radio Cooperativa.

Santiago residents banged pots and pans in anger over the shooting, while Chileans took to social media to call for reforms and condemn what happened. "In a police force with a minimum professional level this should not have happened," writer Pedro Gandolfo tweeted. "A shameful act with a tragic result."

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