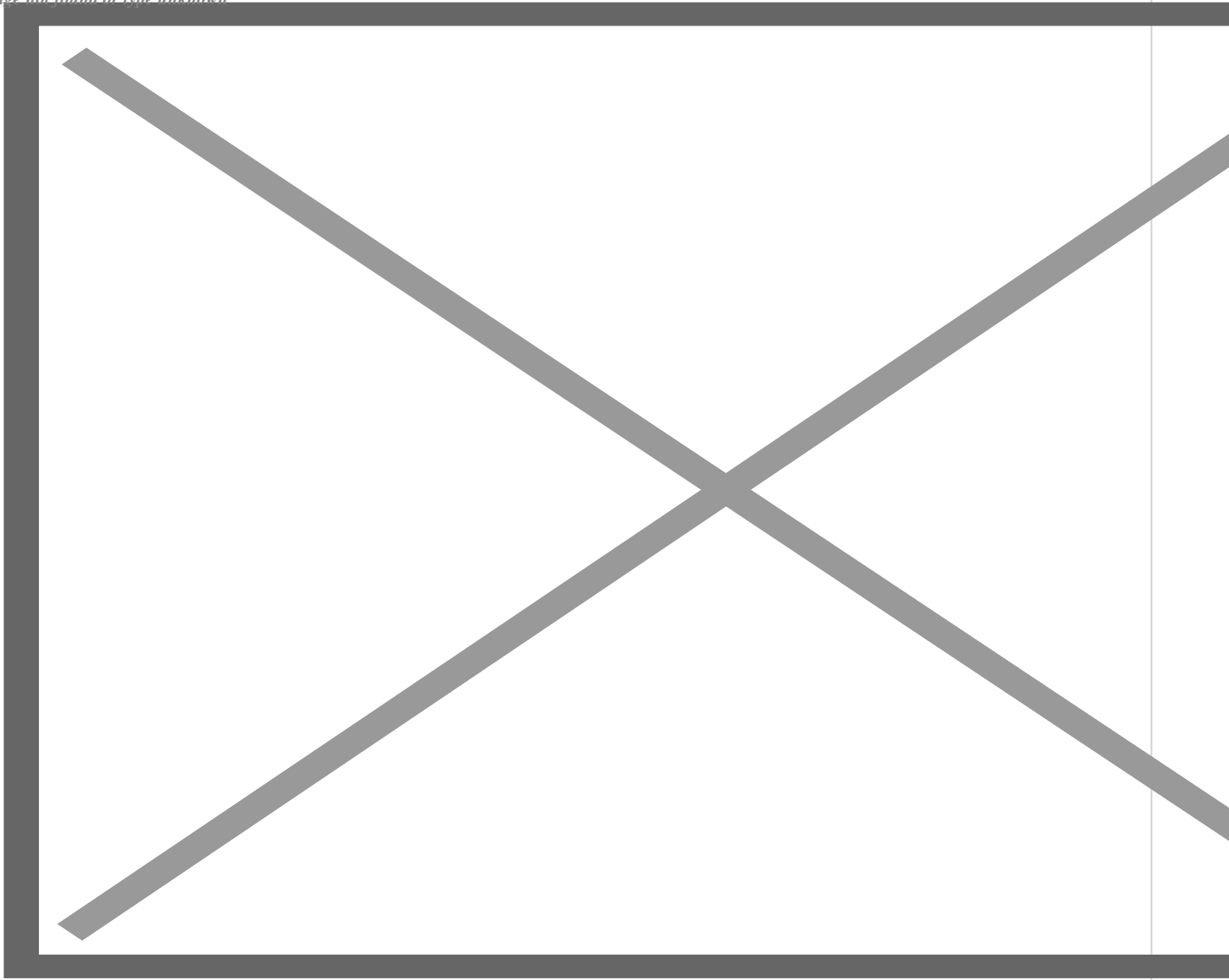


Chile declares state of emergency over Mapuche conflict

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One person was killed and 17 injured on Sunday when clashes broke out in the capital, Santiago, between security forces and protesters marching for Mapuche autonomy [Ivan Alvarado/Reuters]

Santiago de Chile, October 12 (RHC)-- Chilean President Sebastian Pinera has announced a state of emergency and deployed troops to two southern regions where clashes have broken out between Mapuche Indigenous people and security forces.

The Mapuche are demanding the restoration of their ancestral lands and self-determination. "We have decided to call a state of exception" in four provinces of the southern regions of Biobio and Araucania and the deployment of troops to help control "the serious disturbance of public order" there, Pinera said in a speech on Tuesday.

The 71-year-old leader said the four provinces in question have seen "repeated acts of violence linked to drug-trafficking, terrorism and organised crime committed by armed groups" and that innocent civilians and police officers have been killed in the violence.

The Mapuche are the largest Indigenous group in Chile. They number about 1.7 million out of the country's 19-million population and live mainly in the south. Their leaders are demanding that land currently owned by farms and logging companies be restored to them.

The lack of a solution to their demands has prompted armed groups to carry out attacks on trucks and private property over the last 10 years.

One person was killed and 17 injured on Sunday when clashes broke out in the capital, Santiago de Chile, between security forces and protesters marching for Mapuche autonomy. The event was marking the Dia de La Raza, formerly known as Columbus Day.

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