

Chile Students March, Demanding Reforms



Santiago de Chile, August 22 (RHC) -- Thousands of students filled the central streets of Chile's capital city, Santiago, on Thursday, in a march to remind President Michelle Bachelet that their patience is running out as to when she will deliver promised education reforms.

There were some violent clashes between protesters throwing stones and police, though most of the march was peaceful, police said. Authorities estimated that 25,000 people took part, while student leaders claimed about 80,000 participants.

Smaller marches also took place in other towns around Chile.

The students are calling for more active participation in and clarity on education reforms that the center-left government is trying to push through Congress.

Bachelet has pledged to make major changes to Chile's education system, which was privatized under the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, and is often poor quality and expensive, favoring those who have the means to pay.

In May, Bachelet sent the first part of her education reform to Congress, a bill that seeks to change the way schools are funded, ends state subsidies of for-profit schools and eliminates selective entrance policies.

The measure is still being debated in the lower house, with Congressional committees looking into its more technical aspects and gathering opinions.

Plans to make university education free are scheduled for a second round of reforms later this year.

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