

LATIN AMERICA

# Chilean Protesters, Decrying Inequality, Clash With Police

The death toll rose to 11, as authorities try to restore order in the wake of looting and arson



Demonstrators clashed with riot police on Monday in Santiago. PHOTO: MARTIN BERNETTI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

*By Maolis Castro and Kejal Vyas*

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SANTIAGO, Chile—A weekend of unrest triggered by a proposed increase in subway fares extended into Monday, as demonstrators expressed their dismay over economic inequalities and the struggles of working people.

“The poor have no opportunities and the people are tired of the politicians,” said Soledad Sepúlveda, a 37-year-old health care worker who said she struggles to get by despite holding two jobs.

The death toll rose to 11, as authorities tried to restore order in the wake of looting, arson and attacks on the capital’s modern subway system that jolted this prosperous and normally stable country.

Residents cleaned broken glass and removed barricades, as long lines formed at grocery stores and soldiers and police officers guarded the transit system and public buildings. Several lines in Santiago's vast metro system were out of service Monday, forcing many commuters to walk miles to get to work. Some shops and offices remained closed, and motorists cruised the city to find fuel.

"I've spent an hour looking for a gas station, they're all shut down, it's exasperating," said Raúl Pérez, a cabbie. "I don't have gas now. We're like Venezuela."

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### **Photos: Chilean Protests Spread Across Country in Days of Tumult**

Violence spread beyond Chile's capital of Santiago amid looting, vandalism and burning buildings.



Protests in Chile extended into Monday as demonstrators expressed their concerns over economic inequalities. EDGARD GARRIDO/REUTERS

1 of 20

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On Monday, thousands of people convened on the city's Plaza Italy, which has been the focus of the demonstrations that erupted last week. "Chile has awoken," shouted some.

Security forces used tear gas and water cannons to break up demonstrations that they deemed illegal because they didn't have permits. The United Workers Central, a confederation of unions,

threatened a general strike on Wednesday unless the government's state of emergency is lifted and soldiers returned to their barracks. Many demonstrators called on President Sebastian Piñera to resign, even after he pledged on Saturday to withdraw the subway fare increase.

"We have to recognize that there's social discontent and suspending the fare increase is just a pill to alleviate the pain, not the solution," Ms. Sepulveda, the protester, said.

At a news conference Monday, Interior Minister Andres Chadwick said 110 supermarkets had been looted and more than a dozen set afire. Three more people had died, he said, adding to the eight killed as of Sunday. Dozens of policemen and soldiers had been injured overnight into Monday, and more than 1,900 people had been detained.

"We are in an extraordinarily special situation," Mr. Chadwick said.

He said vandals intended to hurt ordinary, law-abiding citizens and he accused some demonstrators of targeting public transportation and stores in a deliberate effort to generate chaos.



A riot police officer in Santiago. PHOTO: PABLO VERA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Mr. Piñera and his aides tried to make a distinction between peaceful protesters and vandals while calling for calm and urging a national dialogue to restore peace. Still, Mr. Piñera's public comments from Sunday that Chile was "at war" with looters and vandals

irritated some Chileans who accused security forces of using excessive force against demonstrators.

From Geneva, Michelle Bachelet, Mr. Piñera's immediate predecessor and now the United Nations' top human rights commissioner, called for talks to end the unrest and urged for an independent investigation into the violence and the use of force by the Chilean security forces.

"I'm very worried and saddened to see the violence, the destruction, the deaths, and the injuries in Chile in the last five days," Ms. Bachelet said in a statement, without referencing Mr. Piñera, a

political rival. “I urge that all of those who plan on participating in the protests today and in the upcoming days, that they do so in a peaceful manner.”



An aerial photograph taken above Plaza Italia shows demonstrations on Monday in Santiago. PHOTO: CRISTOBAL OLIVARES/BLOOMBERG NEWS

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