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Ref: TG AMR 22/2019/001  
Index: AMR 12/2262/2019

Sebastián Piñera  
President of the Republic of Chile

21 October 2019

## **Re: Monitoring of the human rights situation in Chile**

Dear President Piñera

I am writing to express Amnesty International's deep concern about recent events that have taken place in Chile in the context of public protests against measures adopted by your government.

In particular, Amnesty International would draw to your attention the human rights violations committed by agents of the state in the context of the state of emergency which has been declared and under which the Chief of National Defence (Jefatura de la Defensa Nacional, JDN) is tasked with public security operations and the implementation of a curfew in the city of Santiago and other parts of the country. Such measures manifestly limit the human rights of freedom of movement and free passage and of peaceful assembly. In addition, we would highlight the excessive use of force that may be used by the military in contravention of the legal obligations regarding the protection of human rights which Chile has committed itself to uphold.

Further, the decrees that you have issued threaten to violate other human rights such as the right to physical integrity, liberty and life.

As you know, everyone has the right to protest peacefully. The fact that some groups or people use violence during a demonstration does not, per se, make the entire protest violent or authorize the security forces to use force to disperse it. If acts of violence do take place, the Chilean authorities have an obligation to ensure public order by exercising control over these flashpoints, without affecting the right of people to demonstrate peacefully. The primary focus of the Chilean authorities should be to address the demands of members of society, rather than to attempt to silence them through the use of force.

In addition to these concerns, the statements that you issued yesterday, 20 October 2019, in which you said that "we are at war with a powerful enemy who is willing to use violence without limits", thereby equating the expression of social demands with an armed conflict and adopting the narrative of an internal enemy viewed as a military object against which the state would be authorized to use violence, are sending the wrong message to Chilean society. This not only seriously undermines the obligations to respect, protect and guarantee the rights of all people in Chile and, in particular, the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful protest, but also paves the way for the justification of serious human rights violations against the population.

It is public knowledge that, according to the National Human Rights Institute, at least 1,333 people have been arrested to date, including minors; 37 people have been injured by firearms; and nine women have been stripped, among other abuses. According to official figures, the number of people who have died in this context has risen to 11. These reports demand the immediate attention of the Chilean authorities to investigate possible human rights

violations, identify those responsible and put in place urgent mechanisms to put an immediate end to practices that may affect the rights of individuals.

Consequently, during the next few days Amnesty International, in accordance with its mandate, will intensify its monitoring and observation of the human rights situation in Chile in order to analyse the actions of the Chilean authorities and demand that the human rights of everyone in the country are respected, protected and ensured.

In addition, Amnesty International urges the Chilean state to refrain from allowing the armed forces to continue carrying out public security functions and policing demonstrations as a first step to avoid further human rights violations.

Yours sincerely

Erika Guevara Rosas  
Americas director at Amnesty International