

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Chile: The authorities must investigate the alleged abuses committed against demonstrators and avoid excessive use of force

Amnesty International today urged the Chilean authorities to investigate reports that excessive use of force was used against demonstrators during the recent student protests and punish those responsible for any such abuse.

The organization also called on the authorities to respect the demonstrators' rights to freedom of expression and association and to prevent any further abuses in future protests.

Clashes between demonstrators and the security forces during the most recent protest reportedly resulted in the arrest of over 500 students. Several people, including over 20 police officers, were injured.

"We are concerned about the number of complaints of excessive use of force, improper use of teargas, arbitrary detentions and possible ill-treatment at the time of arrest that have been reported during the recent demonstrations," Ana Piquer, Executive Director of Amnesty International Chile said.

"The Chilean authorities have a responsibility to guarantee that their citizens can demonstrate without fear of repression or of being arbitrarily detained," Ana Piquer said. "It is essential that immediate and impartial investigations are conducted into these complaints and that the human rights of those in detention are guaranteed."

"The police should only use force where strictly necessary and even then the minimum possible amount required by the circumstances, so that the risk of inflicting harm and injuries is reduced to a minimum."

Amnesty International recognizes that the authorities have a duty to maintain public order but they should always discharge that responsibility in accordance with international human rights standards on the use of force and without committing abuses.

Those standards, to which the Chilean State is a party, include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all of which guarantee the rights to freedom of assembly and expression and the protection of minors.

"It is essential that police forces understand that respect for human rights is part of their job and that personnel involved in deterrent operations at public gatherings have received training and are aware of the importance of proportionality in the use of force."

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