
Chile's police suspend use of pellets after 270 eye injuries

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Santiago de Chile, November 21 (RHC)-- The Director of the Carabineros, Chile's military police, Mario Rozas, has announced the suspension of the use of pellets as an anti-riot tool, except in cases of "legitimate defense, when it represents a death threat."

The measure follows a study by the University of Chile that states that these pellets are composed of only 20 percent rubber, while the other 80 percent have different elements, such as lead. Rozas said the measure will be maintained while the pellets are subjected to other tests requested from laboratories abroad. "The restriction will be evaluated when we have in our possession the results of the studies," he added.

The Carabineros had rejected the University's report and urged the ammunition supplier to submit a report on its composition. Previously, the Rancagua, Concepción, Antofagasta, Valparaíso and La Serena Courts of Appeals had ordered the police to refrain from using pellets in public demonstrations, as well as to limit the use of tear gas that affects people's physical integrity.

At least 270 Chileans have been wounded in the eyes as a result of Carabineros shooting directly in the face in anti-government protests, a record in world statistics.

Also, since the beginning of the protests against Sebastián Piñera's neoliberal policies, more than 17,000 people have been arrested and 950 are in pretrial detention. Massive demonstrations against the Chilean government began in Santiago on October 14th due to a

30-cent increase in the subway fare.

While this measure was revoked by Piñera, social unrest increased in magnitude as the Chileans began to question neoliberal policies, which have implied a systematic withdrawal of economic and social rights for millions of people.

According to the National Institute of Human Rights (NHRI), over the last month, over 6,000 people have been arrested and 2,400 injured in Chile.

In this context, several entities are seeking to hold Piñera accountable for human rights violations perpetrated by state forces in response to massive demonstrations. After five weeks of protests, the Chilean president admitted last Sunday that "there was excessive use of force" by state agents and that in some cases "the rights of everyone were not respected."

Edited by Ed Newman
