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Statement from the SDSU Center for Latin American Studies on the recent unrest in Chile

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At least 15 people have been killed and over 1,000 people have been arrested as violent protests in Chile are becoming increasingly militarized, stirring public memory about times of dictatorial repression under the Pinochet regime. Chilean President Sebastián Piñera has declared a state of emergency and has delegated Army Commander General Iturriaga in charge of public order as well as implemented nighttime curfews. Instead of confronting the social and political demands being made by the protestors, made up of students, workers, academics, indigenous, and other groups in civil society, President Piñera is demonstrating that he is prepared to suppress democratic protest, violently if necessary.

While the initial trigger for the protests was a hike in the cost of public transportation, the massive swell of grassroots protest lies in the deep social discontent over the results of decades of neoliberal policies. While these policies succeeded in reducing extreme poverty, to a degree, they also heightened levels of socioeconomic inequality that widened the gap between the rich and the poor, as have these policies elsewhere in Latin America. Indeed, Chile was the first neoliberal experiment in the Americas; an experiment that was enforced through a brutal military dictatorship propped up by the United States. This experiment has been repeated throughout the region of Latin America. In Chile, neoliberal policies of privatization and reorganization of the state's role in social welfare have resulted in a weakened pension system, a two-tier healthcare system that discriminates against the indigenous and against women, a public education system that is buckling under the pressure to provide robust education without investment from the state, and an oligarchical political elite who do not see social policy as a matter of citizen rights but as a matter of charity. These inequalities became too burdensome to accept when the very instrument of access – low cost public transportation – was increased, furthering the cost of basic living.

The Center for Latin American Studies at San Diego State University supports the communities of civil society in Chile who are struggling for equality and equity in the face of growing economic and political austerity, supports their right to protest and make their voices heard, and denounces the excessive exercise of force by the military. We also call on the Chilean government and civilian groups to seek out dialogue and diplomacy, in the spirit of democratic resolution to this conflict.

We stand with the academic community of Anthropology at the Pontificia Catholic University of Chile who have produced the following statement:



ESCUELA DE ANTROPOLOGÍA
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES

DECLARACIÓN PÚBLICA

Comunidad Académica Escuela de Antropología UC

NO ESTAMOS EN GUERRA

Ante los gravísimos acontecimientos que en la actualidad ocurren en Chile, la comunidad académica de la Escuela de Antropología UC declara:

1. No estamos en guerra y rechazamos categóricamente el mensaje de que estamos en guerra. La guerra justifica la violencia desatada, la guerra profundiza la diferencia, la guerra implica enemigos. Es una lógica y una forma de actuar no solo errónea sino peligrosa. Los discursos de guerra nos traen a la memoria momentos en los que se han generado rupturas profundas, con resultados de violencia y muerte que dejan heridas de las que la sociedad chilena aún no se ha recuperado; la llamada “pacificación de la Araucanía” y la dictadura cívico-militar son ejemplos de ello.
2. No estamos en guerra, sino en una situación de sufrimiento social. Un sufrimiento y una angustia que en el día a día sobrellevan estoicamente las diversas comunidades que componen Chile. Mujeres, hombres, niñas y niños, trabajadores, estudiantes, adultos mayores, indígenas y no-indígenas e inmigrantes día a día nos dan una lección práctica de cómo guardar relaciones cívicas y respeto a pesar de las dificultades que nos tocan, sea manteniendo la compostura y el cuidado mutuo en un metro repleto y caro; sea apoyando a parientes y amigos enfermos; sea con un apoyo económico a quien lo necesite en un país cada día más caro.
3. No estamos en guerra, sino en un estado de desigualdad. Una desigualdad profunda de una sociedad que no logra asegurar servicios básicos, como salud y educación de calidad, y sueldos dignos para todos sus ciudadanos. Una desigualdad que merece mucho más que las respuestas tecnocráticas desconectadas de la realidad de las personas.
4. No estamos en guerra, sino en crisis. Una profunda crisis social e institucional que nos recuerda lo frágiles que son las convivencias y lo difícil que es construir una democracia día a día; una crisis de confianza que, por estos días, se manifiesta en el descontento de las y los ciudadanos.
5. Ante esta realidad, como comunidad académica de Antropología UC rechazamos la lógica de guerra; nos apena y nos preocupa la presencia de militares en nuestra calles y plazas. Rechazamos desde lo más profundo la violencia que nos aflige: la violencia estructural de la desigualdad y la violencia directa que en estos días nos muestra su cara más desagradable en Santiago y en el país.
6. Como comunidad académica de Antropología UC adherimos a las manifestaciones pacíficas. Sabemos que la única vía de avanzar es mediante el diálogo, la participación y la búsqueda genuina para construir la sociedad y la democracia que queremos que Chile sea. Como antropólogas y antropólogos estamos disponibles para contribuir a esta tarea de transformación social y política.

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**School of Anthropology
Faculty of Social Sciences
Pontificia Catholic University of Chile**

Public Declaration

Academic Community of the School of Anthropology UC

We are not at war

Given the serious events currently occurring in Chile, the academic community of the School of Anthropology UC declares:

1. We are not at war and we categorically reject the messaging that we are. War justifies unrestrained violence, war deepens differences, war implies enemies. This is a logic and a justification of action that is not only mistaken but dangerous. Discourses of war bring to our collective memory historical moments that have produced profound rupture, with resulting violence and death than have left wounds from which Chilean society has still not recovered; the so-called “Occupation of Araucanía” and the civil-military dictatorship are examples of this.
2. We are not at war, rather in a situation of social suffering. A suffering and an anxiety that all the diverse communities of Chile are stoically enduring on a daily basis. Women, men, girls and boys, workers, students, the elderly, indigenous and non-indigenous and immigrants offer us practical lessons, every day, on how to maintain our civic relations and mutual respect despite the difficulties we all confront, be that maintaining composure and mutual care in the metro when it is overfull and expensive; be that supporting sick parents or friends; be that economic support for those who need it in a country where life is increasingly expensive.
3. We are not at war, rather in a state of inequality. This deep inequality in a society that cannot guarantee basic services, like quality healthcare and education, and dignified wages for all citizens. This inequality that deserves so much more attention than technocratic responses so disconnected from the reality of citizens.
4. We are not at war, rather in crisis. A profound social and institutional crisis that reminds us of the fragility of co-existence and how difficult it is to build a democracy, every day. This is crisis of trust that, during these last days, has been manifest by the unrest of our citizens.
5. Vis-à-vis this reality, as the academic community of Anthropology UC, we reject the logic of war; the presence of the military in our streets and our plazas saddens and concerns us. We reject, most profoundly, the violence that afflicts us; the structural violence of inequality and the direct violence that in these days has revealed its ugly face in Santiago and in the country.
6. As the academic community of Anthropology UC we support peaceful protest. We know that the only way to advance is through dialogue, participation, and genuine efforts to construct the society and the democracy that we want Chile to be. As anthropologists we are willing and ready to contribute to this work of social and political transformation.

Signed

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