

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile.

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Dear Friends of EPES,

Since October 18th, over a million people have turned to the streets throughout Chile to express their discontent in the most massive demonstrations in recent memory. The protests have been mainly peaceful with music, art and banging of pots to denounce decades of abuse and extreme inequality generated by the neoliberal economic model imposed during the military dictatorship. Along with this, violence and looting have multiplied and the government's response has been repression, including nine days under a state of emergency, with the return of the military to the streets.

At EPES, we are overwhelmed and heart-broken by the ruthless human rights violations exercised by police against people of all ages peacefully protesting against economic injustices. For example, Gustavo Gatica, a 21-year-old student, was shot in the face with a pellet gun and lost both of his eyes. The police's brutality and their total sense of impunity have surpassed anything seen since the end of the dictatorship in 1990. Sadly, more than 200 people have lost an eye, more than 2,000 remain hospitalized and an unknown number have been killed as tanks, tear gas, and water cannons tinged with toxic chemicals fill the streets.

What does this mean for EPES? Although many aspects of "normal" life have been altered, our work continues with community health teams, immigrant communities, as well as national networks working for **Health for All** and to end violence against women. We have helped organize local assemblies, our centers provide a meeting space for many organizations, and we have hosted seminars with experts to understand what is happening. We have also organized stress management sessions for the health teams and staff, many of whom are feeling retraumatized by the militarized atmosphere and systematic violation of human rights.



Protesters in Plaza Baquedano, downtown Santiago, Chile, October 22, 2019 (source: Carlos Figueroa, WikiMedia Chile, photo in header by: Hugo Morales, Wikipedia)

Along with anguish, we also feel hope as we watch people struggle to build a new society in thousands of activities throughout Chile. Neighbors gather in participatory assemblies to give careful thought to solutions to the challenges they face and to help design a new constitution. Even rival soccer team fans have joined together to demand change.

We do not know what the future will bring, but we are hopeful that real change is possible. More than ever, we appreciate and depend on your solidarity, friendship and support. Please keep EPES, the health promoters, the Lutheran Church and the Chilean people in your thoughts and prayers.

Blessings and peace,

Karen Anderson

Karen Anderson

ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile, on behalf of the EPES Staff

THE 11 PILLARS THAT UPHOLD CHILE'S NEOLIBERAL MODEL

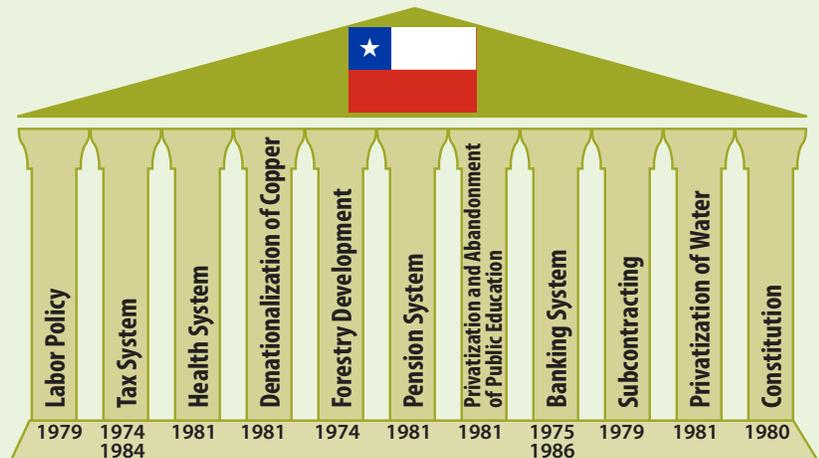
The economic and social model installed by the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), still in effect today, is at the root of decades of abuse and extreme inequality. The structural violence that affects Chileans' daily lives triggered social upheaval in Chile.

This social movement calls for an end to the dictatorship's legacy: the Constitution of 1980, the private retirement pension system (AFP), private health insurance, privatized education, the education debt business, a labor law that severely limits workers' rights, privatization of natural resources (water and minerals) and a regressive tax system that favors the wealthy.

These comprise the 11 pillars of the dictatorship which President Sebastián Piñera's government has no intention of changing. Rather, it seeks to protect this system by introducing inconsequential measures that stop far short of the demands called for by the people.

CHILEAN MODEL UNDER DICTATORSHIP

Structural and daily violence 46 years after the military coup
THE 11 DICTATORIAL PILLARS THAT ARE STILL IN PLACE AND MAINTAIN THE CHILEAN MODEL



Credit: Fundación SOL, English version EPES and Dorrie Simon.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE RECIPIENT SPEAKS AT EPES FORUM

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL CALLS FOR AN END TO POLICE REPRESSION IN CHILE

At a forum organized by EPES Concepción, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize recipient of 1980, decried police repression in Chile and pledged his support for the movement for social change.

“People and Common Good: An Option for Social Justice” was the conference EPES held late October at its center in Concepción, attended by 80 people and Esquivel, founder of Argentina-based Servicio Paz y Justicia, a human rights and social justice advocacy organization.

Perez Esquivel, who was jailed in 1977 during the military rule in Argentina, reflected on various historic moments of resistance to civil-military dictatorship in Latin America. Participants engaged in dialogue with the acclaimed visitor, who offered a broad perspective of political developments in Latin America, as well as the role of multinational corporations in the continent, and people’s striving for dignity.

“The government has the obligation to listen to the voice of the people,” he said. “Unlike what President Piñera says, there is no war here. What we have here is a rebellion by people who demand respect for their rights... this can only be achieved through dialogue, not by repression,” he affirmed.



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel with EPES Concepción director Dr. Lautaro López.



Leaders and neighbors of different municipalities of Concepción took part in the forum with the Argentine Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

EPES RESPONDS TO SOCIAL UNREST



A constitutional change to guarantee social rights such as health was one of the main demands that arose from the group.



EPES health promoter group with forum participants, underneath the mural “Another World is Possible.”



Women participated in circle dances to restore harmony and self-esteem, and strengthen themselves for this historic moment.

EPES HEALTH PROMOTERS ARE FORTIFIED TO HANDLE AND COPE WITH CHILE’S SOCIAL CRISIS

Three weeks into the social explosion that continues to shake Chile, on November 6th, EPES convened health promoter groups to its center in Santiago to think together how women’s health and other needs fit in the demands unfurled in today’s historic moment.

Health promoters and EPES staff discussed the situation Chile faces, which stirs up memory both of the brutality of the military dictatorship headed by Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990), as well as the grassroots movements that played a key role in bringing it to an end. The women decried the government’s actions and the police repression it unleashed against citizens since the protests ignited on October 18.

Participants energetically agreed that “in the past women were at the forefront of the struggles for justice and today we must unite to create community spaces for self care, reflection and actions that reflect our demands that have not been heard.”

The gathering concluded with a healing ritual. The women held hands and performed circular dances to songs such as Victor Jara’s “Right to Live in Peace” that became anthems of the peaceful demonstrations of recent weeks.

LISA ARONSON FONTES LAUNCHES HER BOOK “INVISIBLE CHAINS” IN CHILE

Lisa Aronson Fontes, PhD in psychology, researcher, professor and writer, launched the Spanish translation of her book *Invisible Chains* at the EPES Foundation center in Santiago, on November 21.

The book explores couple relationships in which one person dominates the other through tactics such as isolation, humiliation, intimidation, manipulation, physical abuse and sexual coercion.

Sandra Palestro, coordinator of the Chilean Network Against Violence Towards Women, which organized the event jointly with EPES, commented on the book. “It is impressive that the author has spent 25 years studying coercive couple relations in the most diverse populations of three continents. Aggression against women is remarkably similar in different cultures. This suggests a transversal pattern of dominant misogynous male behavior.”

Lisa Aronson Fontes, an expert in areas of child abuse and gender violence, teaches at the University of Massachusetts, and is a court expert for domestic violence cases.

Sandra Palestro and Lisa Aronson Fontes at the launching of Lisa’s book, Invisible Chains.



Angelina Jara, Lisa Fontes, María Eugenia Calvin, Karen Anderson and Sandra Palestro at book launch, standing in front of the mural which reads “for a life without violence.”



REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRENT CRISIS IN CHILE

Pastor Marcelo Huenulef Ortega

Trinity Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile

“This is a revolution that arose from below, without political parties or leaders, just citizens, participatory democracy and recognition of all identities. Christianity is not always well regarded because in the past it has often opposed alternate life styles, social struggle, and has sided with the powerful. For those of us who are not part of that traditional Christianity, this is the moment to give faith to the fact that not all Christians are closed-minded or discriminatory. Our Christian outlook is the opposite: open, embraces everyone, active politically for a more just and more human society. We cannot remain indifferent; we must be part of the new society that is about to be born. You sense that in the marches, in the assemblies and in the solidarity on the streets.”



The National Institute of Human Rights (INDH) has filed 74 complaints of torture with connotation of sexual violence since the beginning of the social outbreak in Chile, 4 times more than in the 9 years since the National Institute was created.

Sandra Palestro

Member, National Coordinating Board of the Chilean Network Against Violence Towards Women

“Women are playing a significant role in the social upheaval in Chile against inequality and abuse. We women have been in the streets for years; now we are in the street again joining millions protesting against injustice but we also are organizing local neighborhood assemblies. Political sexual violence aims to humiliate women [...] as punishment for the transgression of moving outside our traditional role. The military dictatorship did that when it subjected women to sexual violence, we saw it again in the high school student movement, and, once more, today police are committing that crime against women activists.”



Valeria García

Llaretta Group Health Promoter

“Over decades, enormous injustice and inequality in Chile built up increasing discontent that finally ignited last October 18. We’re tired of working so hard without even meeting our most basic needs and then receiving miserable retirement pensions, while the top 1% unjustly takes 33% of the pie. People demand the right to free, quality education, and the right to health. Today poor people die while on a waiting list for medical care. Retirees deserve to live without worrying about how to make ends meet. We don’t want to see any more elderly people rummaging for food in garbage bins along the open air markets. Human rights violations give rise to fear, powerlessness and anger. But now we are transforming indignation into this struggle for dignity.”



Dr. Lautaro López

EPES Concepción Director

“The Chilean people were besieged by debt, precarious jobs, a public health system in crisis that results in poor people dying while on a waiting list for care, inadequate and expensive public transportation, students and professionals in debt to pay off college loans, and miserable pension checks for the elderly. Now young people and women, who had previously shown their power to convene mass mobilizations, are at the forefront of the social explosion. I am convinced that in our neighborhoods, alongside the people, we shall share hope and work together to build a new society, where we will share bread and fish, in the grandeur of a more compassionate and fair community.”





EDUCACIÓN POPULAR EN SALUD
POPULAR EDUCATION FOR HEALTH

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EPES was created in 1982 to promote health with dignity for the poor through empowerment, mobilization and collective action. It began as a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and maintains close ties nationally and internationally with the Lutheran church and is an ELCA Global Mission supported ministry. EPES became an independent, non-profit Chilean foundation in 2002.

Demonstrators in eye patches rallied to denounce the blindings in Chile (AFP Photo/Martin Bernetti). More than 200 protesters have been blinded in one eye by pellets fired by state security agents.



FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN...
~ ISAIAH 9:6
Have a blessed and joyous Christmas!

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID IN TIMES OF CRISIS

A sense of vulnerability commonly associated with natural disasters and social conflict has been widespread in Chile since the emergence of mass demonstrations and brutal repression over a month ago. The Psychological First Aid course held November 20 equipped EPES staff and health promoters with techniques to provide containment to others, and to cope with their own stress.

Participants described increased stress, anxiety, fear, pain and indignation as a consequence of witnessing or experiencing police repression and widespread human rights violations committed in these weeks. On the other hand, the awakened social consciousness and determination of fellow Chileans to end decades of inequality, also have evoked hope, resistance, courage, and great joy.

The daylong workshop enabled people to think about and discuss the concept of subjective urgency and to practice containment techniques, such as Jacobson progressive relaxation therapy, that can provide relief in crisis situations.

ACONCAGUA HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS ACQUIRE NEW SKILLS

Thirty-one health care professionals gained skills that will enhance their work at the Aconcagua Public Health Clinic, thanks to a course held by EPES November 18–19. EPES education staffers Sonia Covarrubias, María Eugenia Calvin and Virginia Norambuena gave the seminar, entitled "Strengthening tools for integral care of the elderly," to public health employees of Valparaíso, under the Health Ministry.

The 20-hour course, held in two full days, equipped participants with theoretical and practical tools that draw from popular education methods and principles. The focus on rights and social determinants of health will foster their work with the local community and with other sectors of society.



Health promoters putting into practice relaxation exercises learned during the Psychological First Aid workshop.



EPES educators María Eugenia Calvin, Sonia Covarrubias and Virginia Norambuena at the workshop in San Felipe.