

On coup anniversary, Bachelet urges Chileans to strengthen democracy

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SANTIAGO, Chile --

(AP) -- Chile's president marked Tuesday's anniversary of a bloody military coup with a call for her nation to strengthen democracy.

It was the first anniversary of the 1973 coup since the death in December of the man who led it, Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

President Michelle Bachelet placed a wreath at a memorial to Salvador Allende, the elected Marxist president who committed suicide rather than surrender to the rebellious military.

"Let's think about how we can contribute to make sure nobody will again have to suffer what so many suffered", added Bachelet, who was herself jailed and tortured under Pinochet.

She urged citizens ``to work for the more democratic, more just, more human, freer Chile."

An official report concluded that 3,197 people were killed for political reasons during Pinochet's 16 years in power. Thousands more were jailed and tortured or forced into exile.

The Pinochet family, meanwhile, gathered at the former dictator's countryside residence near Santiago to inaugurate a crypt where his ashes were placed.

The day appeared largely free of the violence that marked the date in previous years. On Sunday, however, a march by some 5,000 people to the city's main cemetery to pay tribute to victims of the military regime ended in clashes between police and rock-throwing protesters. Authorities said 189 people were detained.