

St. Vincent prime minister recovering after head injury at protest

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St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, his shirt covered in blood, is evacuated after media reported that he was hit by a stone during a protest in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines August 5, 2021. REUTERS/Robertson S. Henry?

Kingston, August 6 (RHC)-- The Prime Minister of the Caribbean country St. Vincent and the Grenadines was struck by an object on Thursday during COVID-19 related protests and was flown to nearby Barbados for medical treatment, officials said.

Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves had been walking through a group of some 200 protesters to reach the entrance to Parliament when he was hit by a projectile just above his temple, his office said in a statement on Thursday.

A Reuters witness who had seen protesters throw water bottles and stones heard a person in the crowd yell: "Somebody's busted the prime minister's head!" Reuters images show that blood from Gonsalves' head wound had stained his white dress shirt crimson, as an aide held a wad of paper towels to his head.

Gonsalves' office said he had been "bleeding profusely" and taken to hospital. "He has informed his colleagues that he is recovering," his office said.

During a Parliament session in the evening, Finance Minister Camillo Gonsalves said medical staff had recommended that the Prime Minister be flown to Barbados for an MRI scan.

The incident took place as Gonsalves, 74, had been returning to a Parliament session where lawmakers were discussing a public health reform that would require most frontline workers to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which comprises a chain of small islands in the southern Caribbean, is home to more than 110,000 residents and known for its picturesque harbors and white sand beaches. The nation's tourism industry was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, and some 15,000 people were displaced from a volcano that erupted in April after decades of inactivity.

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