

Chilean state spreads terror in indigenous communities

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State-orchestrated terror reached another level in southern Chile last week when the armed forces opened fire on unarmed civilians. The unprovoked aggression, which left one dead and several seriously wounded unfolded in the context of the militarization of indigenous communities, escalated in October when deeply unpopular right-wing President Sebastian Piñera decreed a State of Constitutional Exception in four provinces.

Piñera, who faces a Constitutional Accusation that may lead to his impeachment, decreed the first 15-day State of Exception in the provinces of Biobío and Arauco in the Biobío region and the Malleco and Cautín provinces in the Araucanía region on October 12. He extended it for another 15 days on October 26. Congress approved its extension last Tuesday.

On November 3, the day of the incident, Piñera boasted that the deployment of “more than 2,000 troops of the Armed Forces including armored vehicles, helicopters, airplanes, maritime patrols which, together with the work carried out by the Carabineros and the Investigative Police, have allowed the development of more than 20,000 controls, the arrest of 59 people who had arrest warrants.”

Before the dust had even settled, Minister of the Interior Rodrigo Delgado publicly supported claims by the head of national defense in the Biobío region, Rear Admiral Jorge Parga, that Mapuche insurgents “ambushed” and “attacked” military personnel.

According to Parga, hooded individuals “attacked” Carabineros with large caliber weapons and then “retreated into a wooded area and, hidden in the forest foliage, attacked and ambushed the personnel.” When the Marines arrived, they began “to repel in the first instance with non-lethal ammunition and shotgun shots,” but in the face of “the constant fire from the hooded men, the personnel had to use their service weapons.”

Commander in Chief of the Navy Juan de la Maza in an interview with *El Mercurio* praised “the reaction demonstrated by the Marine patrol” and the “fulfillment of duty of the Navy personnel, in accordance with the attributions and duties assigned in this state of constitutional emergency...”

Piñera went on further claiming that “firearms, a rifle and munitions of war and a vehicle with a warrant for robbery” had been intercepted from the “terrorists” in the confrontation.

Witnesses have since come forward debunking the official version as a story cut out of whole cloth.

What has so far come to light about the state murder of Yordan Llempi Machacan, a 23-year-old member of the Mapuche

indigenous community, is that Marines were responsible for the indiscriminate firing of live rounds at two roadblocks on the Cañete-Tirúa route. The military, with Carabinero enforcements, established checkpoints on the main thoroughfare in the Biobío region, 650 km south of Santiago. Dozens of cars were backed up due to armored vehicles blocking the road.

At approximately 4:00 p.m., the military signaled for the civilians to begin moving when, without rhyme or reason, they sprayed the area with live ammunition. At one checkpoint, Yordan Llempi was shot while sitting in his courtyard. Other houses were shot at.

Danitza Herrera told *Resumen* that Yordan, her partner, “was in the courtyard of his house when the militia began to shoot like crazy. They started shooting; they had the road cut off. It was not an ambush by the Mapuche community members; that was a lie.”

Precious minutes were then lost because the Marines first barred the exit to Yordan’s home and then prevented the family from taking the critically injured man to the nearest hospital, a well-trodden military tactic denounced by human rights groups. The Marines “blocked the road and did not let us take him to Cañete hospital,” 20 km away. Instead they were forced to take Yordan 50 km to a community health center in Tirúa, where he died on the way due to loss of blood.

At another checkpoint Marines shot at vehicles. Iván Porma Leviqueo received several shots at point-blank range when he went to help the wounded. A bullet that went through José Huenchuleo’s arm while in his Ute (utility vehicle) hit 15-year-old Joaquín Polman’s knee. A nine-year-old girl was also injured by live fire. Another was shot in the face. These are the known casualties of events that are still being pieced together. According to *El Ciudadano*, there were still other Mapuche people with gunshot wounds who had not received medical care several days after the incidents.

It can be categorically stated that this bloody exercise was used by the government to stampede sections of the middle class into clamoring for a strong hand and to justify an extension of the State of Emergency in the Mapuche territories to the point of normalization. This has been Piñera’s favored course throughout his three years in office.

Piñera transformed the southern region into a war zone, only to replicate the war-zone atmosphere in Santiago during the pandemic. More and more draconian laws were passed that beefed up state powers and further criminalized first the Mapuche

population, then refugees and migrants, and later all forms of social protest.

He equipped the Carabinero and PDI police with military vehicles and military grade materiel, surveillance and intelligence equipment and unleashed the Carabinero Special Forces and the Special Operations Group (trained in Colombia and the US to combat terrorist groups), responsible for human rights atrocities in Mapuche territories and later in Santiago when millions took to the streets at the end of 2019. Amid the largest anti-capitalist demonstrations in Chilean history, the police, special forces, black berets and the military committed rape, torture and murder.

Carabineros have been used as a private police force for large landowners and the forestry conglomerates. *Interferencia* revealed that CMPC subsidiary Forestal Mininco provided the vehicle which the police officers used when they killed Camilo Catrillanca, a militant of the Mapuche, Arauco-Malleco Coordinating Committee. This was further extended to the point where now the military can be deployed to protect “critical” privately-owned infrastructure throughout the country.

Today’s use of the Navy, notorious for coordinating repressive operations including torture and murder during the fascist military dictatorship, is in line with the policies advanced by the fascist Republican Party candidate Jose Antonio Kast who has surpassed the official right-wing candidate, Sebastian Sichel, in the presidential election polls.

In a sense he is trying to recreate at a higher level the atmosphere during 2017 elections, which saw appeals to backward sentiments of law and order to combat so-called “rising delinquency,” being tough on “illegal immigration” and dealing with “terrorism” in the south.

There is no doubt that Piñera is playing the xenophobic and law-and-order card to unite the right and the extreme right of his coalition Chile Vamos with an out-and-out fascist.

Piñera, assisted by the compliant conglomerate media, has recently begun polluting the airwaves with talk about the danger of insurgency and narco-terrorism, accusing Mapuche guerrillaist organizations of terrorism and drug trafficking.

What these groups have conducted are legitimate land seizures and raids of private property combined with bankrupt peasant-based actions consisting of arson attacks on machinery, vehicles, timber and property.

The WSWS has a principled opposition to the middle-class nationalist politics associated with guerrillaism, which have been brought into the Mapuche communities by the Frente Patriotica Manuel Rodriguez (FPMR), the Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR), MAPU-Lautaro and other pseudo-left and anarchist groups.

These anti-Marxist organizations in no way further the fight for the conquest of power by the working class but on the contrary drive a wedge between workers and the extremely impoverished peasant Mapuche communities. While making up 10 percent of the national population, the percentage of Mapuches living in poverty is up to four times the national average, and in some communes, such as Cholcol, multidimensional poverty—lack of access to proper housing, potable water, electricity, health care, educational facilities, etc.—affects 65 percent of the people.

The claims of insurgency, terrorism and drug-trafficking is aimed at further criminalizing the Mapuches.

To what end? Former Navy Director of Intelligence Oscar Aranda provides an insight in an article for *Revista Marina*, an organ of the military institution, where he calls for a counterinsurgency strategy against the Mapuche population. In spite of the intelligence jargon, the experiences in Algeria, Vietnam, Central America and more recently Afghanistan provide us with enough evidence to know what is in store.

“Insurgency, both rural and urban, is the abandonment of political dialogue as the engine of democratic progress and its replacement by violence,” writes Aranda, turning reality on its head. It is the state that has by force historically denied the Mapuche peasant communities the right to land for more than a century when the defeated tribes were placed on reservations. More recently, the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet rescinded the land seizures of the 1960s and 1970s and repressed peasant organizations. Thanks to his 1974 701 decree, subsidizing 75 percent of the costs of forestry plantations, the Matte and Angelini conglomerates have amassed 2 million hectares, while the entire Mapuche population lives on less than 500,000 hectares.

The deeply anti-democratic “anti-terrorist law,” promulgated in 1984 under the auspices of Pinochet’s National Security Doctrine, has been applied under both military and civilian rule against indigenous communities with bloody results.

The call for counterinsurgency measures takes this punitive approach to a whole new level. Aranda continues, “[i]t is legitimate for the State to respond to the insurgency with a multisectoral effort to modify the social, economic and cultural problems that serve as its substratum, *while simultaneously neutralizing, acting in accordance with the law, those insurgent elements that develop irregular actions* (added emphasis).

“Within the latter is Counterinsurgency (COIN), which is a military activity of neutralization of irregular actions when police means are overwhelmed by the escalation of violence in terms of intensity or geographical scope.” In other words, the methods employed by the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan are to be brought to southern Chile.

The Chilean working class and youth must urgently develop an independent political movement that unites with their international class brothers and sisters, who are their true allies, and adopts the program of world socialist revolution. Only the working class, led by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the party of Leon Trotsky, can provide a lead to the Mapuche masses.



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