

# Boric's police state: 200 Carabineros raid university in Chile

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The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the raid on a university campus in Santiago, Chile last Friday, November 24, by a large contingent of Carabineros special forces and warns that the action, which could not have proceeded without a nod from the ruling Stalinist-pseudo-left coalition government of Gabriel Boric, sets a dangerous precedent for the establishment of a police state and authoritarian rule.

At 2 p.m., approximately 200 Public Order Control (COP) riot police raided the Metropolitan University of Education (UMCE), cordoning off the entire campus and violently assaulting students, staff and educators in an operation that reeks of premeditation.

UMCE academics from the departments of History and Geography were among those to suffer the brunt of the attack. In an open letter they stated that “Carabineros entered one of our classrooms where two academics who were giving classes were pushed when they tried to protect their students. They sprayed them with gas in the face and body, beat their students, intimidated them, even throwing a tear gas bomb inside the classroom.”

In one incident, a tear gas canister was fired at the body of a lecturer who was also pepper sprayed while recording the police assault.

Professor Marcela Romero Jeldres, an academic in the Department of Pedagogical Training and secretary of the Faculty of Philosophy and Education, was arrested for the temerity of asking the cops why they were inside her campus.

What followed is a graphic illustration of the type of regime being prepared against the working class as a whole. Prof. Romero was taken off campus, photographed without consent and placed in a police van where three COP officers began interrogating her about an arson attack and insinuating that she endorsed it. She was informed that she was being detained as someone of “special interest,” based on a false report given to the

public prosecutor's office by the riot police.

“I asked them to read me my rights; nobody did,” Prof. Romero recalled in an opinion piece in *Cooperativa*. “They put me through a biometric computer where they even had my signature and photograph. They put me in a cell, they did not allow me to make phone calls, they did not read me my rights, nor the rights that a detained woman should have, even knowing that I was the minister of faith of my faculty.” She was illegally kept in custody for 16 hours.

UMCE Dean Elisa Araya condemned the flagrant attack stating in a press conference that “State officials violated in an absolutely disproportionate manner a space of higher education, exercised unjustified violence against members of the community, and took students, officials and even professors who were teaching classes into custody.

“We cannot tolerate that a community as a whole is violated. Faced with these facts we want to announce that we will exercise all necessary legal actions to ensure the safety of our community, because we believe in public education in safe and secure spaces,” Araya concluded.

Marisol Durán Santis, the dean of the Metropolitan Technological University also issued an open letter in which she made the significant point that the forced entry into UMCE was “a flagrant transgression of the principle of university autonomy, which is fundamental to our democratic coexistence and cannot be violated under any excuse...” The deans of 18 other public universities issued a combined statement opposing the attack on the university.

In contrast, the entire bourgeois media reported the extraordinary events by focusing almost exclusively and in minute detail on the attack suffered by a patrol car stationed near the university, the pretext used to invade the university premises.

Not one posed the most obvious questions to the cops,

such as why weren't the assailants immediately arrested—in video footage circulating on social media two of the three assailants suffered serious burns and one was hit by a moving police car. Why were 200 members of Carabineros special forces required to arrest three individuals, one a minor under 16? Why was the entire university cordoned off and an academic arrested? Why were classrooms tear-gassed, students beaten?

A case in point is the arch-conservative *El Mercurio*, which obsequiously quoted verbatim Gen. Juan Muñoz, who claimed that “after arriving at the site, due to a call of disturbances, a group of approximately 10 individuals arrived, three of whom jumped on the vehicle and threw, cowardly and artfully, an incendiary device.”

“The uniformed officers were inside a patrol car at the intersection with Grecia Avenue” *El Mercurio* continued “when at least three subjects approached, sprayed accelerant liquids on the police car and then threw a Molotov cocktail bomb. However, the carabineros managed to notice the situation and managed to pull themselves out of the flames, so no one was injured. Only the vehicle was seriously damaged...”

To pose the question is to answer it: the bourgeoisie in Chile are renowned putschists. In 1970 they received millions from Washington and the CIA to orchestrate a campaign of chaos and stampede the middle classes to clamor for a strong hand. They hailed the military coup of 1973 and reaped a bonanza under the 17-year dictatorship.

Similarly to the period of the 1970s that ushered in revolutionary convulsions on a global scale, the bourgeoisie has been in the throes of a profound crisis of rule since 2019, when half the country was involved in anti-capitalist demonstrations. It has since strained every muscle to push the public discourse to the right.

Not a day passes when the bourgeois media is not terrorizing the population with lugubrious stories of uncontrollable delinquency, of the rise of migrant-run organized crime, of “terrorist” Mapuche networks and so on, while the armed forces, who waded knee deep in the blood of thousands of political opponents following the 1973 coup, are grotesquely lionized as self-sacrificing saviors, patriots and martyrs.

To date, the sclerotic and corporatist trade union bureaucracies have not uttered one word against what amounts to a police-state dress rehearsal, let alone rallied the working class to come to the defense of the students and teachers at UMCE. For months since the return to face-to-face classes, students have protested the dire state

of the education system and its dilapidated infrastructure—schools with leaky roofs and damp and moldy classrooms, lack of textbooks and teachers, rat infestations and non-functioning amenities—only to be met with violent police repression.

The historical significance of this assault against students and educators cannot be overstated.

Fifty years ago, on September 11, 1973, as US-backed Gen. Augusto Pinochet violently overthrew the Stalinist-led Popular Front government, universities were prime targets of the murderous Chilean armed forces, student youth suffering among the highest casualty rates. In the ensuing repression, the military junta expelled tens of thousands of students, blacklisted and exiled academics, and closed entire faculties considered “subversive” as the education system was privatized and the notoriously inequitable voucher system was imposed on the population.

This catastrophe was made possible by the politically criminal actions of President Salvador Allende, his Socialist Party and the Stalinist Chilean Communist Party, who in the lead up to the coup showered the military institutions with extraordinary powers and granted them executive positions in their government.

Their political heirs in the leadership of the trade unions and in Gabriel Boric's Apruebo Dignidad coalition government, since coming to office in March 2022, have implemented key legislation that empowers the military and police to protect “critical infrastructure,” to shoot to kill, while giving state agents legal immunity from prosecution. Along with the mass arrest of a Mapuche community for seizing ancestral lands last week, the raid on UMCE must be seen as a warning to the working class of the bourgeoisie's advanced state of preparedness for dictatorship.



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