

# Chile's "missing" Haitian children: Kast manufactures a scandal to vilify migrants

Mauricio Saavedra  
25 June 2026

On June 15, 2026, *Biobío* news site published a leaked preliminary report from the Comptroller General's Office, dated April 14, 2026, setting off a political firestorm that has dominated Chilean public life. The report examined a sample of 105 Haitian children who had entered Chile between January and October 2025 under family reunification programs and found that 64 could not be located at their registered addresses.

It is part of a broader criminal investigation covering the years 2022 to 2025 into dozens of charter flights carrying hundreds of children. The investigation is looking into the potential bribery of public officials, all of them from the previous government headed by Gabriel Boric.

Within hours, the entire state machinery, now dominated by the extreme-right, lurched into action. President José Antonio Kast convened an emergency meeting at La Moneda with the heads of the Supreme Court, Senate, Chamber of Deputies, the National Prosecutor's Office and six ministers.

The National Migration Service (SERMIG) director Frank Sauerbaum presented a criminal complaint to the public prosecutor to investigate an alleged network involving Haitian minors, focusing on "possible" migrant smuggling-illicit trafficking of migrants and the movement of children under "suspicious circumstances" even though the Comptroller's 70-page pre-report, as *El Mostrador* noted, does not contain the words "trafficking" or "smuggling" even once. It described administrative failures—poor inter-agency coordination, inadequate information systems, a failure to track children after entry.

The right-wing parties pounced. On June 16 deputy Jorge Guzmán (Evópoli) suggested a trafficking network for minors. Deputy Enrique Bassaletti (Republican) went further, raising the specter of organ trafficking, explicitly referencing prior cases where "children had appeared who had been operated on to have their organs removed." Deputy Tomás Kast (Evópoli and the president's nephew) attributed the organ trafficking claim to the Public Prosecutor's Office itself when no claim had been made.

The right-aligned National Prosecutor Ángel Valencia, when asked about Bassaletti's allegations, replied with a conspicuously non-committal "if the congressman says it happened, I understand it must have occurred" lending institutional credibility to such accusations. The corporate media amplified every lurid claim.

Within 48 hours, the narrative changed. On June 18 and 19, senior government figures began walking back the most inflammatory claims. Social Development Minister María Jesús Wulf declared: "This is not the time for politics or for assigning blame; it is time for action." Defense Minister Fernando Barros stated: "There is no serious evidence indicating that we are dealing with a case of child trafficking, organ trafficking, or child prostitution. There isn't a single report or criminal complaint stating 'my child is missing' neither in Haiti, nor in Chile, nor along the route they took."

Investigative Police (PDI) Director Eduardo Cerna stated publicly that every child had entered the country with verified documentation and had

been handed to an adult guardian. On June 19, the PDI had located 33 of the 64 children, all with their families, in good health, enrolled in school and registered in the healthcare system. By June 21, the Undersecretary for Children indicated the PDI search would conclude by June 23, with all indications pointing to the remaining children being similarly located with their families.

On the morning of Tuesday June 23, the PDI confirmed it had located all 64 children named in the Comptroller's sample. The initial pre-report concerning 105 Haitian children who had entered Chile between January and October 2025 under family reunification programs has come to naught. Of the 64 children, 63 are in Chile and the last, a teenage girl, is in Mexico. Trafficking and child trafficking charges were formally discarded in relation to this specific sample.

A broader criminal investigation involves charter flight agencies, repeat adult escorts with no family ties to children, potential bribery of public officials and the unknown whereabouts of the 80 children who disappeared between Haiti and Santiago on a World Atlantic Airlines flight (WAL-801). On October 15 last year, WAL-801 departed Haiti with approximately 150 passengers, of whom around 124 were children aged 6 to 15. Its original itinerary was Miami–Port-au-Prince–Guayaquil–Santiago. It made an unscheduled stop at Lima's Jorge Chávez International Airport, where the children were offloaded and redistributed onto a second aircraft, also designated WAL-801 and operated by Caribbean Sun Airlines. That replacement aircraft arrived in Santiago more than ten hours late, with 154 passengers total of whom only 44 were children.

But the damage to the Haitian community had been done and purposefully so. The Haitian community understood the nature of this campaign from the outset. Michel-Ange Joseph, a migrant rights activist, told *El País*: "This is destroying Haitian culture. We love our children. If there had been a kidnapping, we would have reported it. Now we're afraid to leave our documents behind when we go out because any Haitian is a potential child trafficker—we're viewed as suspects in the eyes of society."

On June 24, Willy Laurent, a naturalized Chilean who according to the Comptroller's office made four trips bringing a total of 22 children into Chile between 2024 and 2025, stated on TVN's 24 Horas that he acted entirely in good faith and always with the authorization of the parents waiting in Chile. He explained: "I did all of that in good faith to help the families. Since they don't have the possibility to travel—because to travel everyone needs a visa—and since I have the possibility, I collaborated with them." He also stated he had presented himself to the Prosecutor's Office, which he said confirmed he had no complaint or charge against him.

The entire affair must be understood within the trajectory of Kast's criminalization of immigrants as entry-point to a broader social counterrevolution. Aping the fascist in the White House, he has launched a program of border trenches and walls and a military deployment against migrants. Legislation has been introduced to criminalize irregular entry

and extend administrative detention to 180 days, along with bills obligating health and education workers to report undocumented migrants to immigration authorities, and the stripping of access to healthcare, education and housing from undocumented immigrants and their children.

The Haitian children scandal serves as a political cover for Kast's National Security agenda. He manufactured a crisis where a voiceless and disenfranchised sector of the population was used to justify the further moves to a police state under the emotionally charged allegations of child smuggling, child prostitution and organ trafficking.

Moreover, the Haitian children scandal erupted amid a growing political crisis for the Kast government; one poll recorded a disapproval rating of 30.4 percent in mid-June. The government's flagship National Reconstruction Project of corporate tax cuts combined with savage public spending cuts and deregulation is facing popular opposition.

This is the context in which the reunification of Haitian children with their families is being weaponized for nefarious purposes. Kast's sudden, feigned concern for the welfare of Haitian children is grotesque beyond measure. This is the same man who paraphrased Donald Trump by claiming that among immigrants were "criminals, hired assassins, members of international gangs, rapists and abusers," and who has cited El Salvador's notorious Terrorism Confinement Center as a model for Chile.

### **Foundations for attacks laid by Boric government**

But Gabriel Boric's administration laid the foundations for the attacks that Kast can now mount against his pseudo-left and Stalinist adversaries. A much broader investigation is being initiated into unregulated chartered flights during Approve Dignity coalition government. It is one of several probes launched against Gabriel Boric's government, along with an exhaustive fiscal audit and nine constitutional accusations.

The background to the chartered flights crisis begins with the right-wing government of Sebastian Piñera (2018-2022). In April 2018, a month into his second administration, Piñera announced a package of anti-migration measures. The most significant was the introduction of a mandatory Single-Entry Tourist Visa requiring all Haitian citizens to obtain a consular visa in Haiti before traveling to Chile, permitting a maximum stay of 30 days, with no right to change immigration status once in the country.

Simultaneously, Piñera eliminated the existing temporary work visas used by Haitians to regularize their status inside Chile and obligated them to acquire temporary visa applications from consulates in the country of origin. As a partial offset, he announced a Humanitarian Visa of 12 months' duration, to be solicited exclusively at the Chilean consulate in Port-au-Prince, renewable once and convertible to permanent residence framed as the channel for family reunification.

The practical effect was stark. The restrictions did not stop migration; they redirected it underground.

Following the devastating 2010 earthquake, large Haitian diaspora communities formed in Brazil, drawn by construction work for the World Cup and Olympics. When Brazil's economy entered a deep recession and the Obama administration resumed deportations of Haitians in September 2016, followed by Trump's even more aggressive border closures, these populations were forced to redirect. The possibility of entering Chile on a passport alone had already opened the door to charter flights and the first trafficking complaints from 2016-2018 onward. The Haitian population in Chile surged from 1,649 in 2014 to between 65,000 and 75,000 in 2017, to between 120,000 and 179,000 in 2018 and 185,000 in 2019.

This impoverished population was fleeing the imperialist-made

catastrophe in a Haiti reduced to collapse by centuries of French and US predation. At arrival, many Haitians found employment in construction, domestic service and, above all, agriculture. Chilean agribusiness, construction companies and domestic employment agencies absorbed Haitian labor at below-market rates, many in conditions of illegality and denied basic rights. The charter flight networks were the supply chain for a cheap labor market that Chilean capitalism had a direct economic interest in maintaining.

Before May 2022, there was no formal family reunification subcategory in Chilean migration law. It entered into force under the Boric government. Before that date, Haitian parents in Chile who wanted to bring their children either used the Humanitarian Visa, which required application at the Chilean consulate in Port-au-Prince and had an annual cap, or through irregular border crossings.

Over the period 2022-2026, there were 44,047 family reunification applications registered from Haiti, of which 17,354 benefits were granted to Haitian minors—15,956 under the reunification category and 1,398 under the humanitarian category.

In August 2025, two months prior to flight WAL-801, Luis Thayer, Boric's SERMIG director, abruptly stopped issuing family reunification visas to Haitians altogether, recalled the Chilean consul in Port-au-Prince over corruption allegations, and effectively shut the legal door through which Haitian families could bring their children.

Thayer left thousands of families with approved reunification applications stranded, their children's documents approaching expiration, no consular services available, no direct commercial flights operating, and no legal pathway remaining. It was precisely into this vacuum—created by the pseudo-left-led government's own administrative closure of family reunification—that charter flight networks stepped in, charging desperate Haitian parents exorbitant prices for a seat on an unregulated flight, because there was no other way.

The Comptroller's office issued its final report June 24. The final report confirmed a series of severe institutional failures across three services: SERMIG, the PDI, and the Undersecretariat for Children all associated primarily with weaknesses of internal control, lack of institutional coordination, and deficiencies in the management of migration processes.

It found that "these entities had not taken steps to ensure coordination, such as defining protocols for the transfer of complete and timely information; establishing measures to be adopted by each institution in special situations and, in general, joint procedures to ensure the traceability of minors entering the country under family reunification programs."

The investigation is ongoing.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**