

Kast's Security Agenda

The death of Alejandro Águila exploited to militarize Chile

Mauricio Saavedra
8 July 2026

The tragic killing of 12-year-old Alejandro Águila on June 23 has been seized upon by the entire Chilean political establishment to advance a pre-existing agenda: the expansion of the police state, the criminalization of youth, the militarization of public security and the granting of sweeping impunity to the forces of repression. The cynicism is staggering, but it is not new. It follows a well-worn script in which the ruling class utilizes a shocking crime to push through measures that have nothing to do with public safety and everything to do with preparing the state for social counterrevolution.

The facts of the case are harrowing. Alejandro's family was returning from the Santiago airport in the early hours of June 23 when they were intercepted by a gang at an intersection in the municipality of San Bernardo. The five assailants, including two 17-year-olds, stole the family's car with Alejandro unable to escape, his seatbelt still fastened. The father and aunt screamed that the boy was being dragged as the car sped away. Alejandro was dead by the time the vehicle was abandoned nearly three kilometers later.

What followed was a coordinated political offensive. The Pinochetist UDI caucus immediately demanded urgency on a bill to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 14 to 13 and apply adult penalties to 16 and 17-year-old repeat offenders. The Chamber of Deputies approved a non-binding resolution to that effect by 77 votes to 40 on June 24. President José Antonio Kast, who had called for the perpetrators to be imprisoned "for the rest of their lives," endorsed the grieving family's demand for prison sentences without parole regardless of age.

But the most significant demand to emerge from the political establishment was not about juvenile sentencing at all. It was the call, led by figures from across the governing coalition and the so-called opposition, to deploy the Armed Forces onto the streets of Santiago.

The push for military deployment exposes the real stakes of the debate. San Bernardo mayor Christopher White, a member of the Socialist Party (PS), became the most insistent public voice demanding that Kast put soldiers on the streets, even publicly confronting the president on social media. He was joined by senator María José Gatica of the right-wing National Renewal and former presidential candidate Franco Parisi of the right-populist People's Party.

But White was not a lone voice freelancing from municipal government. The demand was formally backed by the highest levels of the PS, including Senator Paulina Vodanovic, the party's president, and Deputy Raúl Leiva, the PS floor leader in the Chamber of Deputies. Leiva was unambiguous in a June 27 interview with *BioBio*

news site. Asked if his party agreed with deploying the military he stated:

"Not only do we agree, but we also approved the constitutional amendment that authorizes it," he said. The "Critical Infrastructure Act allows the Armed Forces to collaborate with law enforcement agencies on matters of public order and security, and this has already been constitutionally enacted and approved. It is the legislative process that is stalled, lacking the necessary expediting by the Executive Branch."

The alignment is instructive. The PS, which presents itself as part of the Chilean "left" is in fact driving the most reactionary demand to emerge from the San Bernardo tragedy. Its position is that the military should be deployed, that the constitutional architecture already exists, and that the only obstacle is the government's lack of will.

Kast is a populist who appeals to the basest sentiments: fear of crime, xenophobic hatred, the longing for an iron fist. His posture on military deployment has evolved in ways that reveal a calculated, Caesarist logic: he is waiting for the popular mandate to do what he has been planning all along.

On June 25, he dismissed blanket deployment as "populism," invoking the case of Carlos Robledo, a conscript serving a 10-year sentence for killing a protester during the 2019 social uprising. "The easy solution, the populist solution, is to call for the Armed Forces to be on the streets today, anywhere," he declared. But by June 27, addressing the UDI's Social Council, his tone had hardened. He was no longer rejecting deployment in principle but demanding the legal framework to make it viable: "If we want to ask the Armed Forces for their cooperation, we have to give them our support and respect them as they deserve (and) not use them for political purposes." He insisted that soldiers must have "political and legal backing" so that none "end up sentenced to 10 or 15 years simply for following orders."

The legal architecture for impunity

The distinction is crucial. Kast is not opposed to using the military against the population. He is demanding that the legal architecture of impunity be completed first; the Rules on Use of Force, the Critical Infrastructure law, the legislative guarantees that soldiers who kill will not face prosecution. His invocation of the Robledo case is bound up with the extreme right's long-standing demand for a blanket amnesty

for all crimes committed by the state apparatus. Those crimes are vast. During the 2019 social uprising, state forces killed more than three dozen people and mutilated hundreds, blinding protesters with pellet guns, crushing bodies under armored vehicles, hurling people from bridges, state repression on a scale not seen since the military dictatorship. Kast's message to his coalition is do not demand deployment without first constructing the juridical impunity that makes such violence sustainable.

This is the context in which the National Libertarian Party (PNL) introduced a bill for a general pardon for Carabineros and Armed Forces members convicted of crimes committed during the 2019 social uprising. The Republican Party caucus backed it as an "act of justice." The debate over pardons and the debate over deployment are two sides of the same coin: the drive to place the forces of repression beyond any legal accountability before they are unleashed on the population.

What is most striking in the week since Alejandro Águila's death is not what the Communist Party (PC) and the Broad Front (FA) have said, but what they have not said.

Communist Party president Lautaro Carmona appeared on the program *Estado Nacional* arguing that "we haven't exhausted the capabilities of the police forces... it's easier to strengthen them professionally from the standpoint of state capacity" and stated that the Armed Forces "aren't designed for the task of comprehensive security." FA deputy Tatiana Urrutia stated that "those who historically raised that banner are many of those who are today in the government itself."

On the question of punitive sentencing for adolescents, Communist Senator Claudia Pascual declared in session in April that she "would not be available to continue lowering the age of adolescent criminal responsibility" arguing that organized crime would simply recruit younger children regardless of the penalty regime.

These are the arguments of parties thoroughly integrated into the capitalist state. The Communist Party of Chile bears a particular historical responsibility for promoting the myth that the repressive apparatus could be captured and made to serve the people—the cornerstone of the Popular Front strategy it pursued as the dominant force within Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government (1970–73).

That strategy consisted of subordinating the revolutionary upsurge of the Chilean working class to the preservation of the bourgeois state. When workers took over factories and organized to resist employer lockouts and fascist violence, the Allende government, with the PC's full backing, sent in the military to retake them by force, brought Gen. Augusto Pinochet himself into the cabinet, and moved to suppress the most militant sections of the working class. The result, on September 11, 1973, was not the "peaceful road to socialism" but a 17-year-long fascist-military dictatorship that murdered, tortured and disappeared tens of thousands.

Today's PC has completed its transformation into a party of the pseudo-left, a political tendency that represents the aspirations of privileged upper-middle-class layers for advancement within capitalist institutions, and whose essential function is to channel working class opposition back into the safe channels of bourgeois parliamentarism and the defense of the very state apparatus that exists to suppress it.

The PC and FA spent four years in government under President Gabriel Boric, implementing the same law-and-order agenda they now feign to oppose. The Boric administration rammed through 15 pieces of security legislation, including the Nain-Retamal Law that granted

police and military a legal presumption of legitimate self-defense when using lethal force. It decreed states of emergency, deployed troops to the southern macrozone and the northern border and built the legal scaffolding that Kast is now extending. The PC and FA cannot lead a fight against militarization because they are complicit in its construction.

The San Bernardo tragedy has been seized upon with such urgency because the Kast government is in political trouble. The Haitian children scandal, in which the government and media spent ten days alleging trafficking networks and organ harvesting based on a Comptroller's report that exposed no such things, collapsed on June 23 when the PDI confirmed all 64 "missing" children had been located with their families. The lurid allegations of child smuggling, child prostitution and organ trafficking were fabrications designed to justify the administration's anti-immigrant offensive of border walls, mass expulsions and the stripping of healthcare and education from undocumented migrants.

Kast's approval rating has fallen dramatically. The Pulso Ciudadano poll released June 29 showed that 56 percent rate his handling of crime as "bad or very bad." The economic crisis is deepening with unemployment now at 9.4 percent and rising living costs, while the structural deficit of 3.7 percent of GDP is being used to justify deeply unpopular cuts to education, healthcare and pensions.

The push for military deployment and punitive sentencing is the political response to this crisis. It is an attempt to redirect social anger away from extreme inequality, mass unemployment, the destruction of public services, the conditions that produce crime, and toward the most politically convenient targets such as adolescents, immigrants and the specter of "disorder" that justifies the expansion of the repressive state.

The demand for troops on the streets, the legal architecture of immunity for the forces of repression, the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility, the registry of "vandals" that will strip protesters of social benefits are not responses to the death of a 12-year-old boy. They are the components of a social counterrevolution that has been under construction since the 2019 uprising shook the Chilean ruling class to its foundations. Every party that has participated in this construction, from the PS to the PC to the FA, bears responsibility. The defense of the working class against the coming crackdown cannot be entrusted to any of them. It requires the building of a genuinely revolutionary leadership, grounded in the international unity of workers across all national and ethnic lines, against the capitalist state and its fascistic government.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact