

From impunity to amnesty: The fascist right's war on accountability in Chile

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In late June 2026, Johannes Maximilian Kaiser Barents von Hohenhagen, president of the National Libertarian Party (PNL), former deputy, and YouTube personality turned political operator, announced the introduction of legislation that would grant a blanket pardon to all military and police personnel convicted of crimes committed during the 2019 social uprising.

Flanked by convicted Carabineros captain Pablo Carvajal as he turned himself in to serve a seven-year sentence for blinding a protester, Kaiser declared that the uniformed personnel “did not go out of their own free will to repress” but were following orders, and that it was “unacceptable” for police to be imprisoned while “criminals received lenient sentences or pardons from the previous government.”

The bill has already secured the backing of José Antonio Kast's Republican Party, whose deputies, including Sebastián Zamora, the former Carabinero acquitted of throwing a 16-year-old off the Pío Nono Bridge and now a Republican congressman, have lined up to support it. The Pinochetist Independent Democratic Union (UDI) has offered only procedural objections, insisting pardons be granted “case-by-case”, while affirming that most of the convicted should be freed.

The push for amnesty is the culmination of a process decades in the making: the systematic shielding of Chile's repressive apparatus from any form of legal accountability. To understand what is being proposed, one must examine the forces behind it, the pattern of acquittals that has already gutted the prosecution of state violence, and the deep institutional corruption that the amnesty seeks to permanently bury and, critically, to license for the future.

The Kaiser Phenomenon: From YouTube to the Corridors of Power

Johannes Kaiser, born in 1976 into a landowning family expropriated during the Popular Unity government, represents a political type increasingly familiar across Latin America: the social media demagogue who fuses economic libertarianism with open nostalgia for military dictatorship. His trajectory mirrors that of Argentine President Javier Milei, with whom his brother Axel Kaiser maintains close personal and ideological ties. Where Milei rants against the “political caste,” Kaiser rants against the “lumpen” and the “troglodytes” who supposedly threaten Chilean civilization.

Kaiser's statements on the Pinochet dictatorship have been unambiguous enough to draw legal sanction. In a 2021 YouTube livestream, he declared that victims executed in the Pisagua case were “well shot” and that Chile “did too little shooting” during the dictatorship. The Santiago Court of Appeals ordered the videos removed as hate speech, and the Supreme Court upheld the ruling. Yet this judicial rebuke did nothing to slow his political ascent. When asked about the 1973 coup, Kaiser replied,

“without a doubt” that he supports “a military pronouncement,” and extended that support to a hypothetical future coup under similar circumstances “with all the consequences.”

This is not abstract nostalgia. Kaiser directed and financed a 2019 documentary calling for the “urgent and prompt” release of Miguel Krassnoff Martchenko, an agent of the infamous National Intelligence Directorate serving over 1,000 years for kidnapping, torture, and murder. During his 2025 presidential campaign, he pledged to pardon dictatorship-era convicts over 80 years old. He has also raised the prospect of proscribing the Communist Party.

Kaiser's economic program—crafted by advisers trained in the Austrian School under Jesús Huerta de Soto in Madrid—promises what he euphemistically calls a “cure” for the country: privatizing Codelco, slashing public spending by 4.5 to 5 percent of GDP, reducing the number of ministries to nine, and eliminating 200,000 public sector jobs. His brother Axel, who runs the Fundación para el Progreso and has served as an adviser to Argentina's President Milei, anchors this project within the Atlas Network, the US-based libertarian infrastructure that has coordinated the spread of far-right economic programs across Latin America. The two brothers jointly inaugurated the Fundación Faro with Milei in November 2024; a think tank designed explicitly to train candidates and propagate the “cultural battle” of the libertarian right.

The Kaiser phenomenon is thus not a fringe aberration but a coordinated political project with international backing, fusing economic shock therapy with the rehabilitation of military dictatorship and the systematic dismantling of legal accountability for state violence.

The acquittals: Impunity as the rule

The amnesty bill is not the beginning of impunity for the forces of repression; it is the formalization of a reality already established through the courts. The cases arising from the 2019 anti-capitalist uprising have a produced consistent pattern.

Sebastián Zamora became the symbol of this pattern. On October 2, 2020, video footage captured the Carabinero driving 16-year-old Anthony Araya into the railing of the Pío Nono Bridge, sending him 7.4 meters into the Mapocho River. The boy suffered fractures in both wrists and a traumatic brain injury. His mother stated flatly: “My son didn't fall. He didn't jump. He was thrown.” The prosecution sought eight years for frustrated homicide. In July 2024, the Fourth Oral Criminal Court of Santiago acquitted Zamora unanimously, accepting a defense medical report that the injuries “would not have been fatal without timely and effective rescue.” The Court of Appeals upheld the acquittal, and the sentence became final.

What followed was elevation. Zamora was reinstated to the Carabineros,

published a book, and in November 2025 was elected to the Chamber of Deputies for the Republican Party with 25,755 votes. Days after his election, he posted—then deleted—a video clip from the war film *Warfare* with the caption: “My cohorts and I waiting for Kast to win so we can go out and clean the streets.”

Claudio Crespo produced an even starker legal contortion. The former lieutenant colonel was acquitted in January 2026 of the charges arising from the injuries that left Gustavo Gatica blind on November 8, 2019. The tribunal confirmed that Crespo was the author of the shots yet simultaneously acquitted him by invoking the Ley Naín-Retamal and finding that he acted in “legitimate defense.” The presiding judge went further, declaring that Gatica had “joined the mass of aggressive protesters to actively participate in stone-throwing” and that the police action was “a necessary, proportional and legal tactical response to a lethal illegal aggression.” CIPER (Center for Investigative Journalism) had previously revealed six videos in which Crespo explicitly threatened protesters. His response: “I don’t regret anything.”

The Crespo precedent is now being invoked in the remaining cases, including that of Captain Pablo Carvajal, who faces charges for blinding Brandon González.

Patricio Maturana stands as the exception that proves the rule. The former captain fired a tear-gas projectile directly at Senator Fabiola Campillai’s face as she walked to work in San Bernardo on November 26, 2019. The impact destroyed both her eyeballs, caused multiple facial and skull fractures, and left her permanently blind, without taste or smell. Maturana was convicted and sentenced to 12 years and 183 days, one of the very few cases where the conviction held. Yet even here, the right is circling. Following the Crespo acquittal, right-wing lawyers have argued publicly that “all sentences handed down against Carabineros on duty in the context of the *Estallido* should be reviewed,” and the Kast government has specifically flagged Maturana for pardon review.

The broader statistics confirm the pattern. By the end of 2023, 45 agents had been acquitted, had charges dropped, or had the prosecution decide not to go forward, against 67 convicted across 40 cases, of whom only 11 received effective prison sentences. In early 2025, the Public Prosecutor’s Office announced it would not pursue 1,509 cases. The Coordinator of Victims of Ocular Trauma noted that the prosecution had in multiple cases failed to secure security camera footage and neglected to cite key witnesses.

The acquittals span the country: Carabinero Juan Felipe González Ganga in Temuco, five Carabineros in Padre Hurtado, Maj. Gonzalo De la Costa in San Joaquín, Commander Luis Mahuzier in Chiguayante. Each case follows the same logic: where a specific shooter can be isolated and the facts are incontrovertible, conviction sometimes holds. Where there is any ambiguity, or where the “aggressive context” doctrine can be invoked through the Naín-Retamal Law, acquittal has become the norm.

Operation Topógrafo

The June 2026 conviction of former judge Juan Antonio Poblete and retired Gen. Schafik Nazal for illegal espionage, the first conviction of its kind in the country, illuminates the deeper architecture of military impunity.

Operation Topógrafo, named after the mole who infiltrates an organization, involved the Army Intelligence Directorate (DINE) illegally wiretapping journalist Mauricio Weibel and military whistleblowers who had reported corruption within the institution. To obtain judicial authorization, Nazal submitted false information to Poblete, who knowingly granted it. Weibel’s phone number was listed under the name

of a Bolivian immigrant falsely accused of being a foreign agent. At least 17 phone lines were tapped between 2017 and 2018, with the real identities of the targets concealed under three false names.

The case exposed a web of relationships that extended far beyond the two convicted men. Poblete’s seized cell phone revealed chats with former Defence Minister Alberto Espina, who asked Poblete for “favors” related to Army cases. Espina, later appointed to the State Defense Council (CDE), recused himself from the Topógrafo case only after two years of resistance. The chats also revealed Poblete’s lobbying of former Defense Minister Mario Desbordes to secure María Teresa Letelier’s appointment to the Supreme Court, a justice who later voted in the ruling that released Poblete from pretrial detention.

Poblete’s ideological commitments were unambiguous. His chats with Nazal are filled with declarations of loyalty: “A big hug to all the members of our Army, victorious and never defeated.” He was appointed an Army reserve officer after authorizing the wiretaps, graduating alongside Sebastián Piñera’s former campaign manager and the current Republican deputy Cristián Araya. Photographs found on his seized devices show him in military uniform.

The Topógrafo case demonstrates that military intelligence treated journalists investigating corruption and soldiers reporting it as threats equivalent to foreign espionage and that elements within the judiciary and political establishment facilitated this. The conviction of Poblete and Nazal, while significant, resulted in only five years of intensive probation after they admitted guilt in a plea agreement. The original prosecution request had been 20 years.

The corruption scandals that Weibel was investigating when he was spied upon reveal the material basis of the military’s secrecy architecture.

Milicogate, exposed by Weibel in 2015, centered on the misappropriation of funds from the Reserved Copper Law, the Pinochet-era statute requiring Codelco to hand over 10 percent of copper revenues to the armed forces with essentially zero civilian oversight. Army officers and NCOs issued false invoices simulating purchases of military materiel. The fraud, traced to between 2010 and 2014, was routed primarily through the Army’s acquisitions and public contracting service and exploited FAMAE, the Army’s weapons manufacturer, as an intermediary with looser administrative controls. While the courts established that US\$30 million was misappropriated, forensic analysis detected operations totaling US\$661 million across 147 suppliers, with nearly a third corresponding to duplicate invoices from just ten companies.

Pacogate was the Carabineros equivalent. By early 2020, the total fraud was valued at over US\$38 million, the largest corruption case under Chile’s reformed criminal procedure system. Over 132 individuals were implicated, including civilians and former members of the high command. The scheme, operating between 2006 and 2017, involved officers in the Finance Directorate falsifying salary spreadsheets and transferring funds to personal accounts. The main trial concluded in April 2026 with guilty verdicts against 28 of 31 accused, yet the tribunal exempted them from the charge of criminal organization, finding instead that they had acted in “coordinated but separate groups,” substantially reducing their sentences.

Amnesty as protection for future crimes

The Kaiser amnesty bill must be understood in this full context: not as an isolated proposal but as the logical endpoint of a process that spans the acquittals of police violence, the military’s espionage against those who expose its crimes, and the institutionalized corruption that has drained billions from the public treasury over two decades.

The forces driving this agenda are not merely seeking to close the books

on past crimes. They are constructing a legal and political architecture in which the repressive apparatus can operate with guaranteed impunity going forward. The Kast government has already moved to militarize the borders, deploy troops against immigrant communities, criminalize protest through the State Security Law, and slash social spending while cutting corporate taxes. These measures will generate resistance, and the amnesty signals to the Carabineros and military that when that resistance is met with violence, there will be no legal consequences.

The continuity is instructive. The same secrecy laws that enabled Milicogate and Pacogate are the institutional ancestors of the intelligence apparatus that spied on Weibel. The same Carabineros who threw a teenager off a bridge now sit in Congress drafting legislation. The same judges who authorized illegal wiretaps lobbied for Supreme Court appointments. The same politicians who asked those judges for favors now deliberate on pardons from the State Defense Council.

The working class cannot place any faith in this process. The pseudo-left parties that governed under Boric—the Broad Front and the Communist Party—helped build the police state infrastructure that Kast is now extending. They passed the Ley Nain-Retamal that courts now use to acquit police shooters. They normalized relations with the fascist right in the name of “republicanism” and “dialogue.” Their calls for “case-by-case” review of pardons are a fig leaf for the same capitulation.

What is required is not the reform of the repressive apparatus but its dismantling. The Carabineros, the military intelligence services, and the secrecy laws that shield them are instruments of class rule. They cannot be democratized; they must be replaced by organs of workers' power. The struggle against impunity is inseparable from the struggle against the capitalist state itself—and the Kast-Kaiser project is a sharp warning that the ruling class will not hesitate to deploy the most reactionary forces at its disposal to defend its crumbling order.



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