

Chile's Carabineros invade school. Workers must come to the defense of youth and students

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The October 8 deployment of Carabinero special forces at the Manuel Barros Borgoño Lyceum, in which a 17-year-old student and his father were beaten and arrested, is the latest and most violent escalation in a coordinated offensive against Chile's youth. The violent repression on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the 2019 multi-million anti-capitalist demonstrations is the culmination of a process built up over years.

According to the father's account, three special forces officers "immediately began beating my son, a 17-year-old minor." When the father reacted, he and a neighbor were beaten with retractable batons, sprayed with pepper gas in the face and mouth and detained.

The student described being choked, thrown against a wall, and beaten in the face and hands. "I told them I was a minor and that I wasn't doing anything," he recounted. "Because I did that, about four cops threw me to the ground, choking me, hitting me and even striking me on the head with a tear gas canister—which was fired point-blank, about 10 cm from my head."

The operation capped a sustained campaign of harassment: mass application of the "Safe School" disciplinary process without concrete evidence, the suspension of two teachers who tried to protect their students and "preventive dismissals" of teenagers in the middle of the day. An early end to the school year has left 77 seniors without grades, meals, preparation for the PAES university admission test or a graduation ceremony. The principal, Victoria Corvalán, called in the Carabineros and has presided over what the student council correctly describes as a "logic of sanction and intimidation."

The escalation that preceded it

The most notorious precursor came on August 17 at the Rayen Mapu Lyceum in Quellón, Chiloé, where Carabineros ordered two students to strip in a classroom. One was made to remove his sweatshirt and shoes and have his shirt lifted before his classmates. The second was ordered to remove his trousers, sweatshirt, shirt and shoes, and then to perform squats in his underwear, in front of classmates, school staff and the police. The pretext was a reported phone theft. These methods belong to Chile's former dictatorship. The strip-searches came four days after the enactment of the Kast government's "Protected Schools" law. The incident was a probe: the courageous protest of students, parents and teachers was met not with accountability but with intensified assault, while the Kast government and the corporate media remained silent.

The list is growing. In late August, Carabineros entered the University of Concepción and violently arrested students protesting the

administration's indifferent response to an attempted student suicide. In September, a student at the San Mateo Bicentenary Institute in Pudahuel was run down by a Carabineros motorcyclist during a protest over teacher shortages; three students were detained. On October 8, Carabineros entered the Javiera Carrera Lyceum in Santiago and detained seven students, after the Coordinating Assembly of High School Students (ACES) had already denounced an earlier special forces entry there.

The pattern is identical: school administrations summon the police, the intervention is presented as a response to "violence," and the result is the mass detention of minors and the criminalization of student organization.

The UMCE raid: the police state was built under Boric

The pseudo-left presents this repression as the work of the Kast government alone. This is a falsification: Kast inherited the police state measures from the pseudo-left.

The decisive precedent came on November 24, 2023, when about 200 Carabineros special forces raided the Metropolitan University of Education (UMCE) in Santiago, cordoning off the campus and violently assaulting students, staff and educators. They pushed and gassed two academics who tried to protect their students, beat students and threw a tear gas bomb into a classroom. Professor Marcela Romero Jeldres was arrested for asking the police why they were on her campus, held illegally for 16 hours, and interrogated as a person of "special interest."

This was carried out under Gabriel Boric, the president the pseudo-left presented as the alternative to the right. It was Boric who built the architecture now being extended: the Naín-Retamal Law giving the police impunity to kill, the permanent state of emergency in the Mapuche south, the deployment of troops to the northern border and the violent crackdown on the anniversary of the 2019 revolt. The "Protected Schools" law that Kast rushed through Congress passed with the active support of the Party for Democracy and defections from the Socialist Party and Broad Front, while the PS bench abstained en masse in the Senate.

The same is true of the austerity fueling the crisis in the schools. Kast's 2027 budget eliminates the computer program for nearly 100,000 students, cuts funding to Bicentenary Lyceums by 46.7 percent and flags the School Meals Program for discontinuation—a continuation of four years of austerity under Boric.

A battery of laws against youth and minors

Police interventions enforce a legal framework built over decades, under every government, against youth and minors. The “School Violence” law, enacted in 2011 during the first presidency of the right-wing billionaire Sebastián Piñera, required every school to adopt disciplinary protocols that, in hundreds of schools, explicitly include calling Carabineros as a standard tool. The “Safe Classroom” law, passed under Piñera in 2018, gave school directors sweeping powers to expel students accused of violence, with minimal due process. It has been applied en masse against students involved in protests and student organizations, as the Barros Borgoño community has experienced directly.

The “Protected Schools” law, enacted in August 2026, further militarizes schools, placing armed agents of the state inside classrooms and granting them disciplinary powers over children. The government’s original bill authorized Carabineros to body-search students without a warrant. The Constitutional Court struck that provision down—and four days after the law was enacted, Carabineros in Quellón did exactly that anyway.

Add to this the campaign to lower the age of criminal responsibility and the deployment of the military to working-class communes, each advanced with the support or abstention of the “left.” The attack on youth is the program of the entire political establishment, from the Communist Party and Broad Front to the Republican Party and the National Libertarian Party.

The unions will not defend the students

The Morenoite Workers Revolutionary Party (PTR) has responded to the Barros Borgoño repression by calling on “the major labor unions, federations, and student organizations” to “commit themselves to defending young people against police repression through struggle and organization.” This strategy buries any struggle against the state’s growing authoritarianism.

The unions will not defend the students, because they are instruments of the state and the corporations, integrated into the apparatus carrying out the repression. The Teachers Association, headed by the Broad Front’s Mario Aguilar, responded to the Rayen Mapu strip-searches by declaring the situation “extremely grave” and demanding that Kast “give a clear signal”—that is, that a Pinochetista president disapprove of his own law. It called no strike and will not now; its function is to dissipate outrage into press releases. The same is true of the entire union bureaucracy, which sits at “tripartite tables” with the government, administering austerity while posturing as its opponent.

The open letter promoted by the PTR, signed by politicians, union functionaries, academics and celebrities, begs the authorities to respect rights they are systematically violating. This is the pseudo-left in its purest form: the substitution of symbolic gestures for the mobilization of social power, containing the community’s anger in a document that will be filed and forgotten while the repression continues.

The lesson of France

The events in Chile are part of an international process. In France, hundreds of high schools have been blockaded or closed, and police have responded with savage violence and mass arrests, with more than 6,600 people, overwhelmingly youth and minors, arrested in barely two weeks. Protests are mounting in Spain over housing, in Portugal among public

sector workers, and in Germany against conscription. The same capitalist crisis drives austerity everywhere, and the same police-state response is being prepared everywhere.

The decisive lesson of the French movement is that student protests cannot defeat the state apparatus on their own. Their struggle poses the necessity of turning to the working class, while workers must come to the defense of the youth against police repression and link this fight to the mounting struggles over wages, jobs, housing, social services and war. The Parti de l’égalité socialiste advances the formation of independent committees of action in schools, universities and workplaces, elected by those engaged in struggle and independent of the trade union bureaucracies and the parties of the capitalist establishment.

This is the demand that must be raised in Chile: the independent mobilization of workers in the mines, the hospitals, the ports, the factories and the transport system, the class with the social power to shut down the economy and stop the state in its tracks.

The consciousness of the working class

The attack on the youth is not separate from the attack on the working class. The political establishment targets the most vulnerable—youth, the elderly, indigenous peoples, immigrants—to divide the working class and to test its methods of repression on those least able to resist before turning them on the class as a whole. The defense of the youth is therefore the defense of the working class’s own future, and the way the working class comes to understand itself as the center of opposition to the entire capitalist order.

The task is to build independent organizations of struggle that unite miners, health workers, teachers, students and the unemployed against the Kast government and the entire political establishment that serves it. The resources exist to provide every Chilean with decent education, healthcare and a secure livelihood; what is lacking is the political independence of the working class from the parties and unions that serve capitalist rule. The defense of the youth is the point at which that independence must be forged.



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