The Rabat scandal, the crisis of the Kast government and the Chilean “left”

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The Chilean government of José Antonio Kast is convulsed by the gravest political crisis of its short existence. The revelation by the investigative outlet *Interferencia* on October 21 that the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights had quietly signed 56 decrees reducing the sentences of men convicted of the rape and sexual abuse of children has detonated a scandal that has already claimed the scalp of Undersecretary of Justice Luis Silva and now threatens the minister himself, Fernando Rabat. The affair has exposed the rottenness of the entire political establishment and, above all, the role of the Chilean “left” as an indispensable prop of bourgeois rule.

The decrees not only free child rapists but granted sentence reductions to torturers and murderers of the Pinochet dictatorship held at the Punta Peuco Prison. These include former CNI agent César Acuña Luengo, responsible for the 1987 disappearance of Alejandro Pinochet, a left-wing militant who bore the dictator’s name but was no relation. Also benefiting are three Tren de Aragua gang members, a neo-Nazi murderer and drug traffickers.

The reductions were not a deviation from the Kast government’s program. Kast is the son of Michael Kast, a Nazi officer who collaborated in the Pinochet dictatorship’s repression, and his brother Miguel advised the DINA secret police. Kast himself is a longtime admirer of the dictatorship who founded the Republican Party in 2019 as an homage to Donald Trump and campaigned on a program of police-state measures modeled on El Salvador’s Bukele.

Rabat personifies the continuity between the dictatorship’s political project and the current government. He belongs to the law firm whose founder headed the Patria y Libertad Nationalist Front, the fascist paramilitary organization that carried out terrorist acts against Salvador Allende’s government. Rabat was part of the legal team that defended Augusto Pinochet after his 1998 detention in London, in the Riggs case concerning Pinochet’s secret accounts and in countless crimes-against-humanity cases.

A government that grants legal immunity to the police, criminalizes immigrants and youth, builds walls and trenches on its borders, and seeks to transform the prison service into a military force will, when it suits its class, release torturers and rapists by decree. The apparent contradiction is the logical expression of a fascist right that presents itself as the defender of “order” while administering a system whose real content is the impunity of the powerful and the repression of the exploited.

But in an increasingly convulsive political and socio-economic situation, Kast’s gambit has had consequences. On October 28, the Chamber of Deputies held a special session with Rabat present, demanded the antecedents for each of the 56 reductions, asked the Ministry to exhaust all legal mechanisms to revoke them, and called for the resignation of Rabat and both undersecretaries, Silva and Pablo Mira.

Rabat’s defense was procedural: Evaluating each application individually, he argued, would mean acting “outside the scope of my attributions.” CIPER and *Interferencia* exposed this claim as patently false. *Interferencia* reviewed hundreds of decrees signed between March and September 2026 and found that Rabat rejected 22 of 36 applications for sentence reductions approved by his own regional offices. Conversely, he issued 11 decrees approving reductions, overruling the express written warnings of his ministry’s regional offices on the grounds of a law in force since 2022 explicitly prohibiting sentence reductions for sex offenders against minors. His decrees cite no court order compelling his hand.

The most damning single fact was reported by CNN Chile. On June 15, 2026, the Supreme Court backed the Ministry of Justice in rejecting a reduction for a man convicted of raping a child under 14, holding that the 2022 reform excluding sex offenders from the benefit is an administrative norm “not subject to the principle of non-retroactivity of penal law.” The very next day, June 16, the ministry granted a reduction, disregarding the Supreme Court’s ruling.

The indispensable role of the Chilean “left” in a deepening crisis

Kast’s approval has collapsed to 22.1 percent, with 67.5 percent disapproval, according to Pulso Ciudadano, the lowest of his presidency. A Criteria poll found 72 percent opposed Rabat’s continuation in office, and 95 percent opposed good-conduct reductions for sex offenders against minors. The government has registered 59 departures of authorities since March.

Before the scandal the government was already sinking. Unemployment reached 9.8 percent in the July–September quarter, exceeding 1 million for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inflation hit 4.1 percent annually, industrial production fell 2.7 percent year on year, and the Central Bank slashed its 2026 growth forecast to 0.25–0.75 percent. The government that promised “business confidence” has presided over the stagnation of accumulation.

The Chilean “left” has now launched its offensive against Rabat, and here the essential political question of the crisis must be posed. The parties of the former ruling coalition—the Communist Party (PC), the Broad Front (FA), the Socialist Party (PS) and the Party for Democracy (PPD)—have seized upon the scandal with an energy entirely absent from their posture toward the government’s actual program. Camila Vallejo, the former government spokesperson and PC militant, has demanded Rabat’s removal, calling Kast’s support for him “incomprehensible.” Deputy Luis Cuello (PC) has filed a criminal complaint for administrative malfeasance, saying Rabat’s “permanence is explained because he has the mission of procuring impunity” for “genocides and torturers.” Deputy Raúl Leiva (PS) has pushed for a constitutional accusation. Deputy Jaime Bassa (FA) has gone furthest, linking the reductions to a supposed “international pedophilia network” involving Paul Schäfer, Jeffrey Epstein and Javier

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None of this should be mistaken for opposition to the government. It is how the "left" seeks to save a government in crisis. The constitutional accusation aims not to bring down Kast but to remove a minister who has become a political liability, so that the government can continue to administer the class war against the working class. The "left" negotiated with Kast the social attacks now underway—the gas price hike, the elimination of social programs, the labor reform extending the workweek, the savage cuts to health, education and housing—and provided the "responsible" cover that legitimized the right's agenda. Now, when a minister becomes toxic, it demands his head—not to advance the interests of the working class but to preserve the stability of the very government it helped to install.

Vallejo's intervention is revealing. She demands Rabat's removal but rejects any characterization of the scandal as "a problem of the State." Here is the Stalinist in her element, defending the bourgeois state against any suggestion that it is the problem. The PC, which fears the independent mobilization of the working class far more than the far right, must contain the scandal as a crisis of one minister, resolvable by his removal.

Bassa's "international pedophilia network" is the populist mirror image of the same politics. It substitutes a lurid conspiracy theory for class analysis, directing popular anger away from the capitalist state and toward imagined cabals. The petty-bourgeois pseudo-left can denounce "the oligarchy" and "the networks" but cannot, and will not, name the real enemy: the capitalist system, its state and its political representatives, including his own party.

La Izquierda Diario and El Porteño

The Morenoite Revolutionary Workers Party (PTR) and the centrist *El Porteño* have both published assessments of the crisis. Both are striking for what they omit.

The PTR, in *La Izquierda Diario*, denounces "impunity for criminals" and calls for a "massive national day of protest" and a "general strike." But its analysis is built entirely on the spontaneity of the masses. It does not mention the "left" once, nor explain that the PC, FA, PS and PPD are essential props of the Kast government, that they negotiated the social attacks now being implemented and built the repressive apparatus now being wielded. It calls for "unity in the struggles on the streets" and "assemblies" without posing political independence from the very parties managing the crisis on behalf of the ruling class.

This is the modus operandi of Morenoism whenever a situation threatens to become a crisis of bourgeois rule. During the multi-million anti-capitalist mobilizations of 2019, the PTR rhetorically glorified the spontaneity of the protests while channeling them behind the Stalinist PC and the Broad Front. Its worship of spontaneity expresses its subordination to the trade unions and the pseudo-left who control these bureaucratic apparatuses. It cannot expose the "left" because it is itself an appendage of the "left." Its "general strike" is a slogan without a strategy: A strike that has not broken with the PC, FA and PS would disorient the masses before being betrayed by the very leaderships the PTR refuses to name.

El Porteño performs a complementary function. Its editorial "First Silva, Then Rabat: Is the Kast Administration Collapsing?" is more sophisticated than the PTR's. It correctly identifies the economic basis of the crisis, the contradiction between the government's promise of "order" and its actual disorder, and the erosion of the ruling bloc's capacity to govern. But the parties that constitute the parliamentary "opposition"—the PC, FA, PS, PPD—do not appear in it at all.

This silence is not accidental. It is the service centrism performs for the pseudo-left. *El Porteño* conceals the central political fact: that the working class can only go forward by recognizing the "left," and its work to contain every crisis within bourgeois parliamentary channels, as the greatest impediment. This is the division of labor of the petty bourgeoisie: The PTR provides the street rhetoric, *El Porteño* the more sophisticated analysis, and both leave the Chilean "left" untouched.

The same silence pervades *El Porteño's* commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the October 2019 uprising, which offers no assessment of the role of the PC, FA and PS in channeling the movement into the dead end of the constitutional process. The "frustration" of October is presented as an absence of leadership, without naming the leaderships that were present and actively worked to frustrate a pre-revolutionary situation.

The Kast government is the product of the betrayal of the working class by the PC and FA, who formed the previous government. The *World Socialist Web Site* warned at the time that "the political descendants of the forces that bore responsibility for straitjacketing the working class ahead of the September 11, 1973 coup are today playing the same role." That warning has been vindicated many times over. Millions of workers who voted for Kast in December 2025 did so not out of enthusiasm for fascism but out of desperation after four years of a "left" government that promised change and delivered austerity, police repression and the defense of capitalist property relations.

The crisis of the Kast government is deepening. But the working class will not advance through the maneuvers of the pseudo-left, who are again seeking to manage the crisis for the ruling class while preparing to present themselves in the next electoral cycle as the "responsible" alternative to the far right.

The working class must draw the opposite conclusion. The sentence reductions are a symptom of a deeper crisis of a capitalist system that can no longer resolve its contradictions through growth and reform, and that is therefore turning to authoritarianism and war. The answer must be the building of the revolutionary party of the working class as a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, capable of uniting workers across national boundaries in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society.



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