



## Statement on the situation of political prisoners and the systematic violation of human rights in Chile



The organizations and groups of civil society and human rights as well as the Chilean collectives of Quebec and Canada that signed this statement are launching an appeal for international solidarity to demand the release of political prisoners and to denounce the repression and criminalization of social protest carried out by the Chilean state, which has worsened since the October 2019 social uprising.

Several international human rights observation missions<sup>1</sup> in Chile have denounced the systematic violations of human rights committed by the state security forces against the population, suppressing in particular the right to protest, to life and to personal integrity. However, this repressive tendency is not new, as shown by the recommendations issued to the State of Chile over the past decades regarding the excessive use of force, the lack of a mechanism for the prevention of torture and the abstention of the use of the anti-terrorist law against the processes of demands for the rights of the Mapuche people<sup>2</sup>. Such violations have become generalized in the context of the massive demonstrations by the population throughout Chile.

We join the actions taking place in Chile and internationally to maintain political pressure during the electoral process of May 15 and 16, which will define the members of the Constituent Convention who will participate in the drafting of the new constitution as well as the mayors, regional governors, among others, which will take place in a context of human rights crisis, impunity and the existence of political prisoners.

According to official data<sup>3</sup> (which are not exhaustive), 27,000 people have been detained and 2,500 have been imprisoned because of their participation in the massive demonstrations that have taken place since the October 2019 social uprising. The international observation missions as well as the Institute of Human Rights (INDH) of Chile have corroborated the fact that most of these detentions were illegal, associated with cases of torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence as well as the lack of access to legal defense.

Since then, during the year 2020, several laws have been put in place to intensify the criminalization of social protest, including the anti-barricade and anti-ransacking law, among others, which have aggravated the prison sentences of people participating in demonstrations. This has been denounced by various national and international human rights organizations, which also condemned initiatives to grant new powers to the Carabineros (Chilean police), such as exemption from criminal responsibility to guarantee order and security.

---

<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), International Civil Society Human Rights Observation Mission, Quebec-Canadian Observer Mission of Human Rights.

<sup>2</sup> Commission Against Torture (CAT). (2018) Concluding Observations on Chile's Sixth Periodic Report: <https://acnudh.org/comite-onu-contra-la-tortura-realizo-observaciones-a-chile/>

<sup>3</sup> Fiscalía nacional Chile (Chilean Attorney General): <http://www.fiscaliadechile.cl/>

One year after the imprisonment of the political prisoners – who are mostly young people, but also minors – the investigation process is still ongoing, so these people are in prison without having received any sentence for the crime of which they have been accused. Their legal processes began in the last few months: some were released due to lack of evidence; others were sentenced to terms of 3 to 5 years; some face a jail term of more than 20 years and have been charged under the State Security Law. To this day, the number of political prisoners continues to rise as protests continue, along with repression and criminal persecution by state agencies. Several political prisoners are currently on hunger strike (to date, between 15 to 80 days of strike) in different prisons in Chile to denounce irregularities in the process, the massive use of preventive prison and the situations of torture suffered during their detention and imprisonment.

Also, it is important to emphasize the situation of Mapuche political prisoners, which has existed for decades. "Since the 2000s, the Anti-Terrorism Law has been used as the main means of criminalizing the Mapuche social protest for which the State of Chile was condemned in 2014 by the IACHR<sup>4</sup>". Currently, the government is militarizing their territory through the constitutional state of emergency, sending and maintaining the armed forces in the Araucanía region. The Mapuche people are permanently subjected to the failure to respect the international obligations contracted by the Chilean State at the signing of the Human Rights Covenants and Conventions.

Several reports and recommendations have been issued to the State of Chile and to the government of Sebastián Piñera in order to put in place mechanisms to ensure access to truth, justice, reparations and guarantee that they are not repeated. On February 2, 2021, the National Institute of Human Rights (INDH) of Chile confirmed that the human rights violations committed by the state agents did not cease during the year 2020 and that even the most basic recommendations have not been fully implemented. Cases of sexual violence, eye injuries and injuries caused by the rifle fire of the *Carabineros* (Chilean police) have not ceased, and the use of chemical agents to injure and burn the population has increased.

On February 22, 2021, the Supreme Court of Justice rejected a series of appeals for protection related to human rights violations. In addition, the highest court of justice in Chile has not responded to requests from nearly 3,000 people denouncing the violation of their rights and is proceeding slowly to process the files of more than 2,500 cases of detention, of which more than 50% have had delays exceeding 365 days.

Since the start of COVID-19 in March of 2020, when there were only 238 confirmed cases and 8 people hospitalized, the president has imposed a curfew and sent the military into the streets. It has therefore been a year that the country has been living in a "state of constitutional catastrophe emergency" which is more in line with a logic of coercion than of public health and is aimed at controlling the population in order to preserve the little popular support of about 6% that the government has left.

In addition to legislative initiatives to strengthen criminal persecution and the repressive power of the forces of order, Chile has invested nearly 19 million Canadian dollars in the purchase of the latest generation anti-riot vehicles, including armored vehicles to launch gas, the same ones

---

<sup>4</sup> CIDH, (2014). Case of "Norin Catriman and others vs. Chile", May 29, 2014, page 168-177.

used by Israel and the United States in different military conflicts. It has also invested 3 million Canadian dollars in the construction of a training center for police and military operations in the territory of the indigenous Mapuche people. Added to this are investments in state intelligence services.

On the other hand, Sebastián Piñera, as President of Chile, is the target of more than 40 lawsuits for his responsibility for human rights violations as well as for his responsibility for the number of cases and deaths related to the COVID-19.

Since the October 2019 social uprising, there have been several calls asking the Canadian government to speak out in condemning the serious human rights violations perpetrated by the Piñera government against the Chilean people. As organizations of civil society and Chilean collectives from Quebec and Canada, we consider that the silence of the government of Justin Trudeau can be interpreted as complicity, showing that Canada prioritizes its investments to the detriment of respect for human rights. We must not forget that Canada is the first country that invests the most in Chile, mainly in the mining sector.

### **Organizations and groups endorsing this statement**

Alternatives, Montréal, Canada

Andrés Fontecilla : Député de Laurier-Dorion à l'Assemblée nationale du Québec (QS)

ARO Coopéraction internationale, Montréal, Canada

Association québécoise des amis de Cuba (AQAC), Boischatel, Canada

Caravane d'amitié Québec-Cuba, Québec, Canada

Centrale Syndicale du Québec (CSQ), Montréal, Canada

Centre des femmes d'ici et d'ailleurs, Montréal, Canada

Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO), Montréal, Canada

Chaire de recherche du Canada en Sociologie des conflits sociaux, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montréal, Canada

Chapitre québécois du réseau pour la défense de l'humanité (REDH), Montréal, Canada

Chile Informa, Montréal, Canada

Christian peacemaker teams (CPT), Toronto, Canada

Coalition pour la Paix en Irlande, Montréal, Canada

Coletivo Brasil- Montréal, Montréal, Canada

Coletivo Brasil-Québec, Québec, Canada

Collectif Chili s'est réveillé, Montréal, Canada

Collectif Le droit de vivre en paix, Montréal, Canada

Collectif Non à l'impunité au Chili, Montréal, Canada

Collectif Place de la dignité, Montréal, Canada

Collectif Solidarité Québec-Haïti, Montréal, Canada

Comité chilien pour les droits humains-Montréal, Montréal, Canada

Comité d'action des personnes sans statut, Montréal, Canada

Comité de Luta Contra o Golpe - Canada, Canada

Comité de solidarité de l'Estrie, Waterloo, Canada

Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine (CDHAL), Montréal, Canada

Comité Québec-Irlande, Montréal, Canada

Comité S.O.S El Salvador, Montréal, Canada

Commission altermondialiste et de solidarité internationale de Québec solidaire, Québec, Canada  
Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN)  
Conseil central de Montréal métropolitain - Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CCMM-CSN), Montréal, Canada  
Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), Montréal, Canada  
Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNÉEQ-CSN)  
Forum diaspora africaine-Canada (ADF/FDA-CANADA), Montréal, Canada  
Frente Farabundo Martí para la liberación nacional (FMNL), Montréal, Canada  
Groupe de recherche sur les imaginaires politiques en Amérique latine GRIPAL, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montréal, Canada  
Mining Watch Canada, Ottawa, Canada  
Mission québécoise-canadienne d'observation de droits humains au Chili, Montréal, Canada  
Mouvement for social justice, Vancouver, Canada  
Mouvement québécois pour la paix (MQP), Montréal, Canada  
New England Human Rights Organization, Boston, EEUU  
Observatoire violence, criminalisation et démocratie (OVCD), Université d'Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada  
Palestiniens et juifs unis (PAJU), Montréal, Canada  
Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay : Député à la Chambre de communes du Canada (BQ)  
Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs (SST) du Centres intégrés universitaires de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS) du NÎM, (CSN), Montréal, Canada  
Table de concertation et de solidarité Québec-Cuba, Montréal, Canada

# Statement on the situation of political prisoners and the systematic violation of human rights in Chile

