

Facing a new repression of the Mapuche people that ended in the assassination of 22-year-old mapuche Rafael Nahuel in the Province of Río Negro, Argentina

Since August this year, indigenous peoples -and in particular the Mapuche people- have reached a previously unheard of media presence, in close connection with an event that shocked Argentina: the forced disappearance (and later confirmed death) of the social activist Santiago Maldonado, after the border police (Gendarmería) arrived to dismantle a roadblock, breaking into the “Pu Lof en Resistencia” Mapuche community of Cushamen, in Chubut Province (Southern Argentina).

On November 26th, the Mapuche community Lafken Winkul Mapu in the Lake Mascarcardi area, located about 35 km from San Carlos de Bariloche, Province of Río Negro, was brutally repressed by the Federal Police and the coast guard, *Prefectura Naval Argentina*. The tragic result of the repression was the murder of 22-year-old Mapuche Rafael Nahuel. Other two Mapuches were hospitalized in the hospital of Bariloche, with live-ammunition wounds. In addition, several other acts of violence perpetrated by law enforcement bodies have been reported in the area. Among the most outrageous was the incarceration of children who were separated from their caretakers and confined in a local police station, violating the most basic human rights and the international Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These events are neither surprising nor coincidental. For some time, the National government –particularly the Ministry of Security, and with the consent of the media – has begun a process of demonization and stigmatization which has no other objective than to construct a so-called "internal other" or dangerous internal, that today is principally embodied in the Mapuche people and other indigenous groups. This stigmatizing demonization, which when carried out by the State has repressive consequences of remarkable gravity, takes place within the context of the great speculative avidity that Patagonian territories are gaining in the face of the voracious advance of neo-extractivist policies.

In Argentina there is an increasing vulnerability of democratic institutions, evidenced by repeated examples of repression exerted on the Argentinian society in general, but particularly on indigenous communities. The disappearance and subsequent death of Santiago Maldonado as well as the existence of indigenous political prisoners in different provinces in Argentina (Chubut, Neuquén, Jujuy, Formosa, among others), force us- as professionals who have been working with indigenous groups- to emphasize the seriousness of these events.

Therefore, we demand the effective enforcement of existing legislation that guarantees the rights of the indigenous peoples [provided by the Argentinian Constitution (Article 75, paragraph 17), various international agreements (Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), as well as other national, provincial and local legislation], by the authorities of the various state actors. We urge the institutions involved and the media to stop the current stigmatization and concealment process. We call on the entire academic community and society as a whole to

demonstrate against these terrible events. We demand an end to the violence perpetrated against indigenous communities and a thorough investigation, trial and sentencing of those responsible.

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