

15 January 2008

Violations of the rights of the Mapuche people in Chile

On 13 September 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the 'Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'. Bolivia has already become the first country to incorporate that Declaration into its Constitution. A second international instrument for the protection of indigenous peoples, ILO Convention No 169, has been ratified by the majority of Latin American countries. Chile is one of the few countries not to have done so, despite the ongoing conflict with the Mapuche, which began over 10 years ago.

National and international human rights organisations have for some time now been reporting repeated acts of brutal police repression – often compared to the methods adopted by Pinochet – against the Mapuche. Those organisations have drafted reports and made concrete recommendations on how to improve the situation, but these have not been followed. On the basis of the information available, no dialogue or constructive consultation exists between the Chilean Government and the Mapuche.

The repression has intensified in recent months, with the conflict leading to several deaths, hundreds of arrests, injuries and imprisonments. Heavy sentences have been handed down to some leaders and tribal elders, under laws left over from the Pinochet dictatorship. Around twenty Mapuche political prisoners are currently in jail in Chile. Several of them have gone on hunger strike for the fourth time in less than two years – this time since 10 October 2007 – in order to secure the release of all Mapuche political prisoners and end the repression of their people.

Is the Commission aware of the repressive policy Chile is pursuing in respect of the Mapuche people, its traditional authorities and its political leaders?

Will it include the serious infringements in this respect on the agenda for the political dialogue, not least at the level of the Joint Committee and Joint Council, with a view to demanding that the Chilean Government bring its policy into line with the relevant international recommendations and minimum standards under international law, in accordance with the human rights clause contained in the bilateral agreement?

Will it, during the mid-term review of the Chile country strategy paper 2007-13, insert into that paper a section addressing this matter more explicitly?

Answer:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2007-6642&language=EN>

