



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Argentina: Mapuche people are on high alert as Milei's government takes office

written by Claudia Korol
December 23, 2023



The land recovery of the Mapuche people is no living a moment of extreme vulnerability with the entry into the government of Javier Milei, a president who vindicates the indigenous massacre headed by General Roca. Although an agreement was reached at the Dialogue Table in June 2023, which recognized the Rewe as a sacred place and authorized the return of Machi Betiana, the outgoing government did not implement the return of the land nor the reconstruction of the houses. In addition, the legislature of Río Negro approved reforms that favor mining companies without respecting the right to free consultation of the native communities.

The recognition of the ancestral rights of the Mapuche people will be one of the first issues to be addressed by the new government. The decision taken in previous

months at the Dialogue Table between the Mapuche communities and the ministries of the Fernández government to recognize the Rewe, where the Machi Betiana Colhuan deployed her task of healing and spirituality, will have to be executed by a government whose president vindicated General Roca as a national hero, responsible for the indigenous genocide perpetrated in the Campaign to the Desert, and whose Minister of Security is Patricia Bullrich, responsible six years ago for the disappearance of Santiago Maldonado and the crime of Rafael Nahuel, the 22-year-old Mapuche murdered in the back, when the first eviction of that sacred territory was carried out, on November 25, 2017.

This November 29, the Federal Oral Court of General Roca, admitting the responsibility of 5 prefects in the crime of Rafa Nahuel, sentenced them in a clearly racist sentence, to absurd sentences between 5 and 4 years. Rafael Nahuel (Rafita), cousin of the Machi Betiana Colhuan, had been participating for two months in a land recovery operation together with the Lof Winkul Mapu near Lake Mascardi. His body was brought down from the mountain wounded by the young men Lautaro González Curruhuinca and Fausto Jones Huala (brother of the lonko Facundo Jones Huala, who is about to be extradited to Chile in extremely serious conditions, as he has been on a dry hunger strike for 25 days).

Lautaro and Fausto were arrested when they arrived at the base of the mountain carrying Rafita's dead body. Lautaro later assured that they decided to take Rafita's body down themselves so that they would not do to him what they did to Santiago Maldonado by disappearing him. Recent ancestral memory: the same day of Rafita's crime, a wake was being held for Santiago, disappeared for 78 days, and then mysteriously "found dead" in the Chubut River. Santiago had disappeared in a repressive operation by the Gendarmerie, in which the Lof en Resistencia Cushamen was attacked. The blood of the Mapuche and of those who accompany their resistance was once again being shed in Rebel Patagonia.

The Mapuche people's right to spirituality

The recovery of lands in which Rafael Nahuel participated had as its objective the creation of a space in a sacred territory where the Machi Betiana Colhuan could develop her spiritual and healing activity. The space of the Rewe was identified according to the Mapuche cosmovision and was recovered so that the Machi could be erected. We are talking about seven hectares, which means nothing in terms of the land dispute in Patagonia but is fundamental in terms of the Mapuche people's right to spirituality, health, and life.

In the trial, it was demonstrated that the prefects fired at least 151 rounds of lethal ammunition. That they specifically went out to hunt and kill Mapuche. The stories seem far-fetched, but they are not. They are all chained together in the labyrinth of criminalization of the Mapuche people and repression of the autonomous communities that continues nonstop.

On October 4, 2022, the four federal forces of the Unified Security Command (Federal Police, National Gendarmerie, Naval Prefecture and Airport Security Police) created by Aníbal Fernández as Minister of Security of the Nation, once again raided and evicted women, girls and children of the Lafken Winkul Mapu community with tear gas and rubber bullets. The information was received with indignation at the 35th Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Transvestites, Bisexuals, Bisexuals, and Non-Binary in San Luis, which led to the call for the 36th Meeting in Bariloche, to demand the release of the Mapuche women prisoners, and the return of the Machi to the Rewe.

The Mapuche communities managed to meet with President Alberto Fernandez in December 2022, who convened a Dialogue Table, which began to meet with a safeguard commission, which included, among others, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel and the Mother of Plaza de Mayo Founding Line Nora Cortiñas, along with other human rights defenders. After six months of dialogue,

greatly hindered by representatives of the National Parks and the government of Río Negro, an agreement was reached on June 1, 2023, in which the State committed to recognize the Rewe as a sacred place, and to authorize the return of the Machi and the reconstruction of three rukas (houses) that had been destroyed in the repressive operation, and proposing another place for the rest of the community.

This agreement led to the release of the four Mapuche women imprisoned with their daughters and sons. However, the national government's administration ended without implementing the return of the Rewe or the construction of the houses, and the delivery of a new territory for the community. According to what the president of INAI, Alejandro Marmoni, informed in a meeting held days before the end of his mandate with Machi Betiana and her mother, María Nahuel, the execution of this decision was suspended in order to favor the next government's administration of Milei.

Now, the Mapuche community and Machi Betiana Colhuan face this new stage with enormous vulnerability, with no support from the Fernandez administration as it left office, they are now left to negotiate with the reactionary Milei regime. Already the legislature of Río Negro has rapidly approved a reform of the Land Law and other projects, adding mining and tourist activity as a possible purpose for the use of fiscal land, clearly favoring mining companies, and ignoring the right to free, prior and informed consultation of the native communities, who mobilized to reject this measure.

These days, spiritual leaders of different peoples are speaking out to demand the return of the ancestral territory to Machi Betiana, basing the importance of these ceremonial and healing spaces for the life of the Mapuche communities. We are talking about human rights and the rights of the people. The government has in its hands the possibility of recognizing them and acting in accordance with them.

Regardless, the community has indicated that they will return to the Rewe, their

ceremonial and health space because otherwise it means the loss of strength and energy for the Machi and for the children who accompany her. This decision surely will be made with the support of spiritual leaders and native peoples from all over the continent.

Source: [Contra Hegemonia](#), translation [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)

