



CHILE MAPUCHE COMMUNITIES™ UNDER MILITARY ATTACK

Last November 16th, 400 Carabineros from the Triguén base and the Fifth Military Region attacked six Mapuche communities in the Ercilla area. This was the second attack by the military, the first having occurred on October 31st.

The military forces issued a communique, justifying the attack by saying that some of the Mapuche illegally possessed firearms, and that some of the accused "planned to attack health centers and churches in the area."

Directors of the Mapuche organization Ad-Mapu held a press conference in Temuco, denouncing this and other violations suffered by the community at the hands of the military government. According to Ad-Mapu, the soldiers interrupted a meeting of the Mapuche communities, striking some of those present, and shooting teargas into the group. As a consequence of the attack, three persons were seriously wounded: Juana Montoya, 90 years old; Maria Clementina Torres; and a baby only a few months old. 14 people were also detained, but most were released a short time after, leaving only Luis Patricio Manquel and Francisco Huayquillal in custody. Two others, Alvaro Curinao and José Rubilar Jofre are unaccounted for, and it is feared that they now count among the "disappeared."

The Mapuches have been forced to struggle for survival and defend their ancestral rights since the military coup of 1973. Their strong resistance has prevented the government from enforcing various decrees which would divide their lands, traditionally held collectively, into individual parcels.

In the last plebiscite, organized by the military government to determine whether General Pinochet should continue in power until 1998, the people of Chile voted a resounding "NO", and the Mapuches participated in a march from the south of Chile to Santiago (435 miles) in the "Caravan of Happiness," organized by the opposition.



Mapuche women in traditional dress.

NORTHERN AYMARA AND RAPANUI MEET THE MAPUCHE

From the 4th to the 6th of August, the First Encounter to draft a constitutional proposal on Indigenous peoples in Chile was held in Temuco. The meeting was organized by the Commission on Human Rights of the 9th Region, and included the participation of representatives of the Mapuche, northern Aymara, and the Council of Chiefs of Rapa Nui (Easter Island). Also participating were non-Indigenous organizations and the Bishop of Temuco.

The representatives discussed four major problems facing the region:

1. water shortages in the land of the northern Aymara, due to the new Water Code passed by mining companies in 1981;
2. lack of recognition of Easter Island territories, which the Chilean government claimed in 1933, arguing that these lands "didn't have owners." Currently, the Rapa Nui Chiefs' Council are claiming their territory through the island's judicial system;
3. the serious problem of the Mapuche, due to the division of nearly all of their communities, through Decree 2568 of 1979;
4. the lack of respect for the land rights of the Huilliche Mapuche people, which were recognized by the Chilean government in the last century.