

The Kurdish Revolution meets the Mapuche People

For several years, the Kurds have been at the forefront of a **Rojava Revolution** in Western Kurdistan/Northern Syria. Their society is organized according to *Democratic Confederalism*, an ethical form of political organization first sketched out by the Kurdish intellectual, Abdullah Ocalan. It brings together ideas from libertarian Municipalism, social ecology, and feminism, a mix that seems peculiarly American.

In the middle of a military repression maintained by the Turkish and Syrian governments and the Islamic State, *Democratic Confederalism* has inspired Kurdish women and men to create a new political, social, and economic system dedicated to the freedom of women and the construction of a direct democracy. Women hold meetings to talk about **Jineoloji**, which is “the creation of a women’s paradigm.” *Jineoloji* was a concept that came from the freedom struggle of the Kurdish women and seeks to give, women and society access to science and knowledge and to strengthen the connections between those two.

The Kurdish seed is taking root among activists who are eager to collaborate, inspiring them much like the Zapatista Army of National Liberation before it. Just as Kurdistan has been denied its existence and has been forced into the territorial boundaries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria – so too the ancestral territory of the Mapuche people has been colonized by the states of Chile and Argentina.

According to Lua Montiel, a member of *the Committee of Solidarity with Kurdistan, Chilean and Wallmapu region*, “Kurdish *Jineoloji* helps us to overcome the western and colonial feminism, and to know a new experience of women’s struggles, even more considering the war context that they are facing.” As Nahuel Valenzuela, another member of the Chilean-Mapuche committee put it, the committee “was thought as a broad leftist space that sought to add individualities as well as collectives from a wide range, especially those from anarchist areas and revolutionary and socialist tendencies.”

Montiel explained that they are working “to disseminate the Kurdish political project and the women’s freedom movement which is at the base of it.” Some of the activities the group organizes are courses of self-training for the members of the committee, and public workshops about *Democratic Confederalism*. The committee is a communicational platform that disseminates information about the Kurdish struggle and works to bring their model of organization to the Chilean and Mapuche territory. Meanwhile, in Argentina, a country which also denies the Mapuche people their right to self-determination, leftists and feminists have travelled to Kurdistan, and written books about their experiences with the alternative political system being built in the region.

The Mapuche’s ancestors moved to the region now known as Chile in South America 12,000 years ago. They are the only indigenous group that withstood the attacks of the Inca and were never conquered by them.

Before the Spanish arrived in 1541, the Mapuche occupied a vast territory in the “southern cone” of the continent and the population numbered about 2 million. After about a century of interaction and struggle with the Spaniards, the Treaty of Quilin was signed in 1641, recognizing the independence of the Mapuche. For more than two centuries

they successfully defended this area against the Spaniards and, later, the Chileans. Until 1881 the Mapuche nation was completely independent, territorially and politically. They were “pacified” by Chilean armies financed by England and settled on “reducciones” or reserves, continually reduced over the years on the model of America’s *Indian Reservations* and separated one from another by areas settled by Chileans and European immigrants like Palestinians today.

In 1973, under the regime of Augusto Pinochet which lasted from 1973 to 1990, those Mapuche who were against the regime were tortured, exiled, or forcibly disappeared. Mapuche land is now undergoing a re-militarization under the right-wing Piñera presidency. To criminalize the Mapuche, the state has come up with a specific law: The Antiterrorist Law, which was first created during Pinochet’s dictatorship to arrest, torture or accuse activists who were against his regime. Since the dictatorship ended, this law has been used to put politicized Mapuche in prison or even sentence them to death.

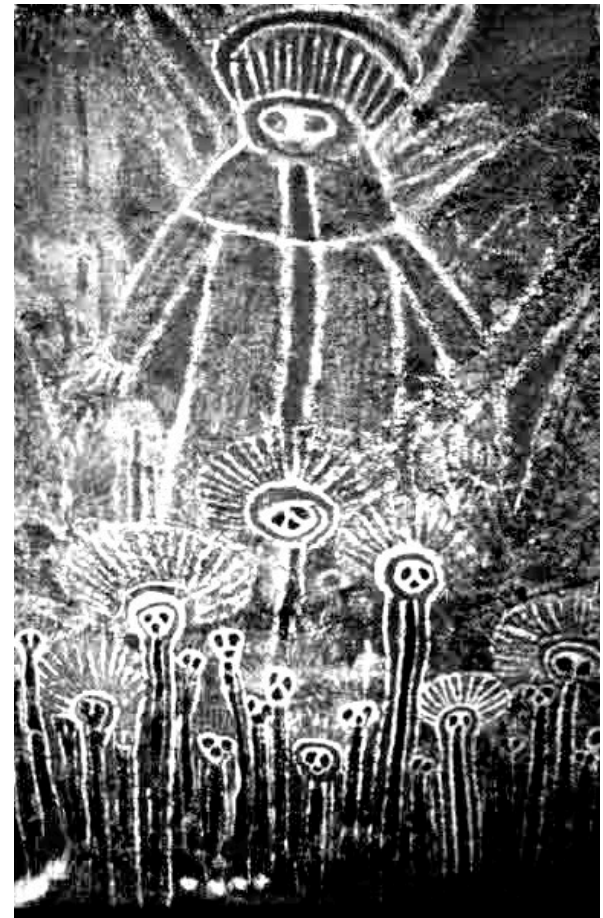
Not so long ago there was the case of **Machi Francisco Linconao**, a healer, authority figure, and elder in the Mapuche community who was accused of murder when a wealthy couple of Lucksinger-Mackay family died in a fire. This family owns many corporations and are well known for being one of the richest in Chile. This couple lived in the middle of a region that concentrate the highest population of Mapuche people.

Machi Linconao was put in prison after two officials planted fake evidence in her house to frame her for this murder. Linconao, many believe, was probably being punished for what she was most known for: defending Mapuche land. After a hunger strike and political solidarity from across the country, she was set free and the state finally recognized that the “evidence” used to indict her was fake.

Mapuche and Chilean activists created *the Committee of Solidarity* to collectively challenge such criminalization of the people’s movements in Kurdistan and Chile. People in Latin America not only want to learn from the Kurdish experience but also bring this way of organization to Chile and the Mapuche people through workshops, editorials, and new organizing strategies. *The Committee of Solidarity* is a communicational platform that disseminates information about the Kurdish struggle and works to bring their model of organization to the Chilean and Mapuche territory. Meanwhile, in Argentina, a country which also denies the Mapuche people their right to self-determination, leftists and feminists have travelled to Kurdistan, and written books about their experiences with the alternative political system being built in the region.

Today, only 5% of their territory is officially recognized as Mapuche territory in Chile. Most of Wallmapu is under the control of wealthy families, the state or corporations that extract the region’s natural resources. Many corporations have bought land, destroyed the once abundant forests and evicted indigenous inhabitants for sugar and genetically modified Soya plantations. Hydroelectric dam projects, confiscation, illegal logging have created many problems for the Mapuche people and their ancestral land and created lots of tension.

Recently, loggers occupied 3,000 hectares of Mapuche ancestral land and exploited the forests in that region. In an effort to regain their land and protect the forest, the



Mapuche tried to stop the logging operations by non-violent actions but on 14 October, a Chilean police squad violently evicted the Mapuches, injuring many of them. 37 people were arrested and jailed for 20 days before being officially charged.

Human rights violations against the Mapuche continue, as was the case in the past. They daily suffer racism, repression and social exclusion, but they keep their struggle alive.




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