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## Chile: Invasion of Mapuche territory by tree plantation companies

The systematic loss of Mapuche territory, that covered some 11 million hectares on the Chilean side (not including the historic territory of the Mapuche nation that stretched over an important part of the Argentinean side), as a result of the military invasion by the Chilean State that began in 1883, represents the starting point of the violent plundering of the Mapuche lands, with the loss of nearly 95% of their total territory.

Nearly a century later, in 1973, the domains were even smaller. The situation worsened during the military dictatorship of Pinochet, when the territory was reduced even further, mostly due to its transfer to individuals and to forestry companies.

This situation was consolidated during the military dictatorship, from 1975 until now, when the forestry activity is inserted in an economic model that overexploits the historic Mapuche territory. The water-vegetation network has been severely affected and there is a systematic increase of the damage caused by pine and eucalyptus plantations: progressive soil erosion, hydric systems alteration and increased pollution, which forces the migration of Mapuche rural communities.

The advance of the monoculture tree plantation invasion in the 8th, 9th y 10th Regions, where the Mapuche population largely exceeds 337.000 inhabitants (1992 Census: according to this census, the total Mapuche population in Chile comprises 928.060 people), represents the Mapuche territorial ethnocide. The lack of land, the cultural and environmental destruction of the ecosystems of the communities surrounding the plantations, makes many people stand against them in self-defense. However, the economic power of the companies, promoted and protected by the Chilean State, represses all Mapuche mobilizations through the courts, the police and third-party actions.

Hundreds of people arrested, accused and sentenced; scores of people wounded and thousands evicted is the result and balance of the numerous Mapuche mobilizations to recover their usurped territories and to stop the green cancer of forestry companies' plantations. However, forestry companies, according to their own data, already occupied an area of 2.118.840 hectares at country level by 1996; and 1.495.760 hectares of historic Mapuche territory (in the 8th, 9th and 10th Regions).

Important Mapuche leaders and territorial authorities like Víctor Ancalaf, Francisco Llanca, Ariel Tori, Gastón Ailla, from Collipulli; Marcelo Catrillanca from Ercilla; Aniceto Norin and Pascual Pichún from Traiguén, among many others, have been victims of the repression of the state and of the manipulation of Chilean forestry companies and powerful individuals, and are currently facing lawsuits and imprisonment.

At present, the territorial invasion is greatly increasing, as well as the systematic ethnocide, under the protection, complicity and promotion of the Chilean State, that under the configuration of a neocolonialist ideology has promoted a commercial system with unicist and genocidal cultural values, whose results are even more atrocious than those of physical extermination. This system has resulted in environmental destruction, such as the loss of water resources --due to their depletion by

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monoculture tree plantations-- land and water pollution produced by an irrational use of chemicals such as fungicides, pesticides and herbicides, and degradation of vegetal cover and soil erosion due to large-scale clearing for industrial purposes.

Today, it is the State itself and these Chilean power groups who have stigmatized the Mapuche situation as a conflict, labeling it as a problem, a hindrance for development and progress. However, the communities are the ones that raise their voices to propose a new way of relationship and progress, to stop the depredation of capitalism in favour of a more equitable and balanced human society. The Mapuche people can make a great contribution to the consumerist and self-destructive Western society, and it is precisely the cultural, philosophical and cosmic vision of the Mapuche what appears as a sign of hope, not only for Chilean occidentalism, but also for humankind as a whole.

The invasion of the Mapuche historic territory by monoculture tree plantations is the consolidation of ethnocide and therefore, an implicit plundering of territorialities.

The responsibility for this situation is not to be found only in Chile, given that there are a number of countries that share the blame through the import of this wood. Belgium, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, are the main buyers in Europe; USA in North America and Japan in Asia, are all buyers which have not in the least cared for the violation of the Mapuche communities' human rights. Undoubtedly they are also responsible for the situation.

By: Alfredo Seguel, Agrupación de jóvenes técnicos y profesionales Konapewman, "Impactos ambientales en el territorio mapuche y la consolidación etnocida y ecocida de la política de estado",