

Argentinean governors reject Milei's suppression of funds

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The position of Torres (on the right, in the photo) was supported by governors of other Argentine provinces. | Photo: Debate

Buenos Aires, February 25 (RHC)-- The southern Argentinian province of Chubut received the backing of authorities from other provinces in the Tierra del Fuego region on Saturday following the decision by far-right leader Javier Milei to cut public funds that are usually transferred to these territories.

Last Friday, the governor of Chubut, Ignacio Torres, denounced Milei's attempts to extort money from the provinces by threatening them with the withdrawal of essential public funds to finance various programs. He warned that if the transfer of these funds is not regularised, gas and oil production will be interrupted as of 28 February.

During a teleconference the day before, Torres ratified his position, which was backed by governors Gustavo Melella (Tierra del Fuego), Marcelo Orrego (Neuquén), Sergio Ziliotto (La Pampa) and Claudio Vidal (Santa Cruz).

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According to media reports, the Peronist governors of Buenos Aires (Axel Kicillof), La Rioja (Ricardo Quintela) and Córdoba (Martín Llaryora) also expressed their support.

Torres and other southern governors claimed that Milei's finance ministry illegally withheld 16.5 billion Argentine pesos (about \$17 million) from them in February, a figure that represents a third of their monthly co-participation.

The governor of Chubut said that "the provinces pre-exist the nation and deserve respect.No one can subjugate them or extort them with threats to restrict public funds that belong to them in their own right".

He added that if the ministry "does not hand over its resources to Chubut, then Chubut will not hand over its oil and gas".According to local media, Milei's offensive, seconded by his economy minister, Luis Caputo, is not only against the Patagonian provinces. It is against all of them and implies, at the same time, a rude treatment by the federal government, as they impose their decisions and do not dialogue with local authorities.

Torres recalled that the funds that Milei will suppress are the basis for paying the salaries of public employees, teachers, police, doctors and nurses, among other employees of vital services.

According to international media, Chubut is the second largest oil producer in Argentina (almost 21 percent of the national total) and the third largest producer of natural gas (6 percent). Last Thursday, a court ruled in favour of Chubut in a lawsuit against the Argentine state over the removal of transport subsidies, which forces every citizen to pay much more for bus fares.

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