

Chile's Supreme Court Orders Government to Release Mapuche Activists



Santiago de Chile, October 21 (RHC)-- Chile's highest court ordered on Friday the immediate release of eight Mapuche leaders who were detained and put under preventive imprisonment since September 23, and accused under a terrorist law inherited from Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship.

The judges unanimously granted a request of legal protection, or habeas corpus, presented by the activists' lawyers. The decision was grounded on the lack of evidence proving their participation in arson, said Judge Milton Juica, spokesperson for the Supreme Court, to reporters. Two weeks ago, the protection measure was rejected by Temuco's Appeal Tribunal.

Chile's Attorney General Jorge Abbott denied that the supreme court's ruling represented a blow for the Public Ministry, saying this was "not a failure at all, this is merely a formal issue of a judicial resolution." He said: "We will move forward with our investigation and will present again, if necessary, a request for preventive prison."

The activists to be released are Héctor Llaitul, his son Ernesto Llaitul, Claudio Leiva, David Cid, Fidel Tranamil, Martín Curiche, and the brothers Jaime and Rodrigo Huenchullán Cayul. The Mapuche activists

are accused of leading various arson attacks in August and burning an evangelical church in the regions of Biobío, La Araucanía and Los Ríos, where conflicts over their ancestral lands against private companies have been the most intense. They claim they are innocent.

Meanwhile, the four Mapuche brothers Trangol are still detained in preventive prison in a Temuco jail over similar accusations — burning a church in La Arcaunia, although the government eventually accepted to drop the "terrorist" charges against them so they would stop their 115-day hunger strike.

However, Ariel Trangol has refused to feed himself until the Public Ministry would accept removing the measure of preventive prison. After 134 days of his hunger strike, his brother Robinson reported in a Facebook post that Ariel was in a poor health state.

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