

Piñera bets on militarizing the conflict of La Araucanía

Via [PienSA Chile](#)

The escalation of the conflict in Araucanía is gaining an inertia that threatens to get out of control, fueled by Piñera's last attempt to resort to a military solution, with no political background for the initiative.

After a sort of security council on Sunday, Piñera announced on Monday a series of measures, including greater controls in the area, the presentation of a new Anti-Terrorism Law to Congress, and the reactivation of his obsessively pursued "security agenda".

The front line security staff was deployed for the ritual visit to the area, including the Ministers of Interior and Defense, Rodrigo Delgado and Baldo Prokurica; the directors of the Carabineros and the Investigative Police, PDI, the Commander in Chief of the Army and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which, as usual, was reduced to a press conference, but on the spot.

Piñera announced the measures in a context where, in the last 24 hours, at least four arson attacks were registered, including the house of a farm in Lautaro.

"I want to recognize the seriousness of the acts of violence and terrorist attacks that we have seen in recent times in the southern macro zone and, particularly, in the Araucanía region, the Biobío region, especially in the province of Arauco, and certain sectors of the Los Ríos region, and I want not only to express our total solidarity and support to the victims of these acts of violence and terrorist acts, but also to express our firm will to combat, with all the elements provided by the rule of law, and always respecting that rule

of law, the acts of violence that we have seen in the southern regions”, said the President in a television broadcast.

“The instruments of the rule of law include the legitimate use of force. Police officers have a mandate from society to use legitimate force, which is a legal and necessary instrument in a state of law and in a democratic society. Of course, the legitimate use of force must always respect human rights,” he continued.

To this end, he will speed up the legislative process so that laws, long since stuck in Congress, will be approved.

This means maximum urgency to “necessary and urgent” laws, such as a “more effective” Anti-Terrorism Law; reforming the Drug Trafficking Law; advancing in the Juan Barrios Law, the law on usurpation of land and insisting on the anti-timber theft bill. “We need Congress to speed up the legislative process,” said Piñera.

To strengthen the actions of the Carabineros and the PDI, Piñera instructed the Minister of the Interior and the chiefs of both police forces to create the umpteenth action plan and reinforce the intelligence and operation work teams.

He also announced the usual call for a national agreement to “join forces to defeat this wave of violence and wave of terrorist attacks”.

He closed his speech with the classic crutch of the need to “condemn with total and absolute firmness, without any doubt or ambiguity, violence, terrorism and drug trafficking”, because only “united we will defeat these scourges and recover what we all want: citizen peace, the security of our communities and strengthen our rule of law and our democracy”.

Having made his statement, he withdrew without taking questions.

A triple complex scenario

It is clear that Piñera intends to opt for the solution of force of the repressive capacity of the State. Of that, there is not the slightest doubt. His first problem is that he does not know how to do it; the second, that the military solution is unsustainable, unless he is willing to burden his conscience with a massacre, and not even then.

The ill-fated Huracán case and the murders of Camilo Catrillanca, carabinero Eugenio Naín Caniumil, and sub-inspector Luis Morales Balcázar, show the path that awaits on that side.

In the case of Morales Balcázar, a legal police conspiracy deployed an operation of 800 investigative police officers, almost 10% of the staff, 200 police cars, helicopters and drones, commanded by police chiefs and prosecutors from the operational center at the PDI headquarters in Victoria, for the meager harvest of one UZI submachine gun, two pistols with adapted barrels, one air pistol, one rifle, one shotgun, six computers, two pistol magazines, five compressed gas cylinders, one sawed-off shotgun, seven cartridges, more than 700 kilos of cannabis sativa, one digital scale, 1. 277 marijuana plants, 40 kilos of pressed drugs and \$ 12.3 million in cash, according to the official report, as well as one policeman dead and eleven others injured, eight seriously.

The episode shows that the solution by force can only aggravate the conflict, without solving it, because it attacks neither the bottom nor the causes of the conflict.

In addition, the solution by force violates the rights of the communities that are not in conflict, guaranteed by international agreements signed by Chile, and therefore, with legal force.

Next, Piñera shows his recognized disconnection with the real Chile. When he invokes the legitimate use of police force, he

endorses, once again, the serious violations of human rights perpetrated by these police forces, ignores the deep crisis that nests in the uniformed police and ignores the widespread citizen demand to re-found it in a new institution.

The legislative scenario is not clear either. The short time left to the government, and its null legitimacy, are not the best endorsement, precisely, to ask for a new overdraft to the already bulky powers of the militarized police. It remains to be seen if his admonition is enough to activate the party of order, because, in defense of property, Chile has seen dead people carrying adobe bricks.

Pressed against time, it is also on the right flank, where farmers' and truckers' organizations and far-right philofascist movements, such as the Association for Peace and Reconciliation in La Araucanía, APRA, who stridently and peremptorily demand a State of Siege.

The picture becomes more complex, since it is also undeniable -and meritorious- that the most radicalized Mapuche organizations are on the offensive in the recovery of lands, supported by an ancestral conviction that the other protagonists of the historical drama unfolding in the wallmapu lack.

And it becomes three times more complex if we add to the equation the timber thefts, police corruption and self-attacks to collect the juicy insurance guaranteed by the government, which also increase the number of incendiary attacks.

It is enormously noticeable that in this conflict, which tends to darken, not a single word is heard about the only possible solution: to activate the commitment to land acquisition, paralyzed since Piñera took over his second administration; to take advantage of the window of opportunity to buy the farmers who are willing to sell, precisely because of the increase of the conflict, and to establish an effective dialogue process,

starting with the recognition of the demands and rights of the intervening parties, and the historical reparation to the Mapuche people.

The State, and Chileans, must not forget or ignore that the origin of the conflict lies in the dispossession of the Mapuche, when the State expanded its control in the area through the so-called Pacification of Araucania, starting in 1861, by means of military occupation.

The UN asked to solve the background of the problem, without military intervention. Jan Jarab, representative for South America of the Human Rights Office, stressed the need for a “participatory and good faith” dialogue to address “structural discrimination” against the communities:

“A response purely focused on public security would fuel what is already a chronic process of tension, mistrust and conflict, not exempt from human rights violations,” he added.

In this complex scenario, it is most likely that Piñera’s call for a national agreement will be reduced to a new staging, to simulate a capacity for resolution that he no longer has, and that the conflict will continue to worsen, without it being clear, for the moment, where events will lead.