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MEPs concerned for Mapuche political prisoners

An EFA press release by MEP Oriol Junqueras (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya)

MEPs from the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament have expressed their serious concerns for the situation of more than thirty political prisoners from the Mapuche indigenous people in Chile who have been on hunger strike since 12 July.

Euro-MPs Oriol Junqueras, Raül Romeva and Ulrike Lunacek met María Muñiz, President of the European Parliament delegation to the EU - Chile Joint Parliamentary Assembly, to raise their concerns. The hunger strikers are angry at the repeated breaches of their human rights and that of their people as a result of Pinochet-era anti-terror law. As regards the Mapuche people this has meant double judicial process both civil and military, lack of safeguards to ensure legal due process as well as the military occupation of parts of Mapuche ancestral areas where territorial rights have often been usurped by multinational companies.

The MEPs have called for the issue to be discussed at the next meeting of the European Parliament's Chile Delegation which will take place on 30 September in the presence of Chile's Ambassador to the EU. They also intend to table an urgent resolution in the European Parliament and want future review of the EU - Chile Association Agreement to take account of the human rights of the Mapuche people. They also welcomed Ms Muñiz's readiness to act in this matter.

Commenting, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya MEP Oriol Junqueras said:

"This group of Mapuche protestors have been on hunger strike since July. They are angry with the Chilean authorities for prosecuting them under the Pinochet-era anti-terror laws for their part in protests to defend the rights of Mapuche people. There are also much wider concerns about the treatment of Mapuche indigenous people in Chile.

"The EU has a role to play in this matter. Europe has important trade and cultural relations with Chile, and the EU places an important emphasis on respect for human rights. We are calling for this matter to be discussed at EU level. We also want the EU - Chile Association Agreement which deals with trade between Chile and the EU to be reviewed at the appropriate time in order to take account of human rights concerns."

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