

New York, May 16, 2006

COMMUNIQUE TO THE CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE

To: The Honorable Andres Chadwick Pinera,
Senator of Congress of the Republic of Chile,
Valparaiso, Chile

Re: the release of the four incarcerated Mapuches on hunger strike; all Mapuche political prisoners; the elimination of the Anti-terrorist Law

Dear Senator Chadwick Pinera:

We, the undersigned, hereby request, with the utmost respect, that you communicate the following to the Honorable Congress of the Republic of Chile:

We are participating in the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held May 15 to 26 at the UN headquarters in New York. Additionally, we have served as delegates at other international events on Indigenous Peoples. Through these channels we have become aware of the grave state of health of these four Mapuche prisoners, as well as the fact that they are engaging in a hunger strike in the Temuco prison.

Jaime Marileo Saravia, Juan Carlos Huenulao, Patricia Troncoso and Patricio Marileo Saravia have been sentenced to ten years in prison and, according to the information that we have received, their trial was irregular, with obvious deviations from international norms on Human Rights.

Additionally, Honorable Senators, we believe that the anti-terrorist law applied by the Chilean judicial authorities to their cases, and those of other Indigenous Mapuche persons fighting for their ancestral rights, do not reflect the advances in international regulations on Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights.

Consequently, we request that the Honorable Congress of Chile take actions that will achieve the immediate release of our incarcerated Mapuche brothers. Also, we recommend that Chile join the international community in its recognition of the rights and liberties of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. Finally, we implore that they abolish a law imposed by ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet that lends itself to violating the rights of aboriginal peoples that are fighting for their legitimate rights. Our request is in keeping with the recommendations made by Mr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, which indicate that a lack of recognition of, and the loss of, territories and legal protections of their rights has led the Mapuche people into a deplorable situation, and has brought about the degradation of their social and cultural conditions.

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Signed,