

No More Blood and Fire

For the first time in Chile, a new type of autonomous social movement, including fishworker organizations, seeks to create a democratic and representative constitution

Three major organizations in Chile have rejected the Social Agenda for Artisanal Fishers that President Sebastián Piñera's government had proposed. (The proposal is called 'Agenda social para los pescadores artesanales' in Spanish.) The three organizations—the Consejo Nacional por la Defensa del Patrimonio Pesquero (Condepp), the Confederación de Federaciones de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile (Confepach), and the Red Nacional de Mujeres de la Pesca Artesanal de Chile—together represent 80 per cent of the artisanal fishers in the South American country.

They said the proposal is characterized by clientalism, neither enabling a move "towards a politically just and socially equitable system," nor creating structural changes in the contested neoliberal political-economy context. Chile is experiencing its worst crisis since the 'imposition of blood and fire' in the mid-1970s under the civic-military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.

of the population due to low salaries, made worse by inadequate social-security systems and privatized pension schemes. Public education and healthcare systems have become even more precarious.

Since November 2019, this new coalition of artisanal fishery organizations have joined the broad social mobilization. Together, they demand the following:

- (a) A democratic process, participative and informed by a constituent assembly, in order to develop a new constitution instead of the current one imposed in 1980 by the civic-military dictatorship.
- (b) The elimination of the corrupt fishery and agriculture laws.
- (c) The establishment of a new social covenant so that the State regains ownership and allocation rights of fishery resources without compensation.
- (d) The State guaranteeing food security and the people's right to nutrition and food, based on sustainable artisanal fishing.

The artisanal fishery organizations, together with a broad coalition of citizens' organizations, demand the annulment of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Law 20.657 of 9 February 2013. The annulment is important for social and environmental justice and to end the corrupt privatization of Chilean fisheries. This law is commonly known as the 'Longueira Fisheries Act', named after Pablo Longueira, the former finance minister and former presidential candidate. He pushed the legislation through parliament between 2011 and 2012, with the help of the large Chilean fishing companies and transnational corporations with headquarters in Japan, Iceland and Spain. Parliamentarians from all political parties backed it, with support also coming from leaders of

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Since 18 October 2019, more than 2 mn citizens have initiated hundreds of peaceful protests on the streets and squares of the country's main cities. They have demonstrated against three decades of lopsided government policies that have concentrated power and wealth in the hands of one per cent of the population, which controls 36 per cent of the national income. This has brought in its wake massive indebtedness and impoverishment

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the two principal Chilean artisanal fishery national confederations at the time.

This collusion enabled parliament to “expressly privatize” the Chilean fisheries, taking them out of democratic and public control. It is alleged that bribes were paid to hand over the ownership of fisheries for free—and in perpetuity—to seven family clans and transnational companies.

This led to seven years of fully tradeable fishing market shares—that can be sold, bought, mortgaged, rented and inherited by its owners. Consequently, 69 per cent of the major Chilean fisheries are in the hands of only four large companies, while 31 per cent of the remaining shares are divided between 97,000 vessel owners of artisanal fishery boats.

This neoliberal twist in policy is driven by exports and extraction. It has overexploited 70 per cent of Chilean fisheries, taking them close to collapse, according to 2018 reports of the Undersecretary of Fisheries (called ‘Subpesca’).

An unpredictable political and social environment now prevails leading up to the referendum called by the Chilean regime on 26 April 2020. The Chilean public has to vote on whether or not it seeks a new constitution. Since November 2019, local cabildos (open forums) and autonomous citizens’ assemblies have been organizing themselves; they have sought the participation of coastal communities, indigenous peoples and dock workers, as also student organizations and feminist groups.

Food security

The immediate demands of the social movement include, first, the annulment of the current fishing and agriculture law; second, the initiation of a participative and informed process in order to elaborate a new sustainable and equitable fishing and agriculture law; third, the restoration of the role of the State as the assigner of access and user rights to national fisheries resources; fourth, the restoration of the rights of small-scale fishers and indigenous communities; and fifth, ensuring that national food security is based on consuming fishery products sourced from domestic sustainable artisanal fisheries.

PATRICIO IGOR MELILLANCA



San Antonio fishermen protesting against the Longueira law. Its annulment is important for social and environmental justice and an end to the corrupt privatization of Chilean fisheries

This is unprecedented in Chile. A new kind of autonomous social movement is seeking to create a democratic and representative constitution that allows for the establishment of a pluri-nationalist, pluri-cultural, pluri-ethnic republic in which gender equality, decentralization and the recovery of fraudulently privatized natural resources and common goods (water, fish and mineral resources) is guaranteed. The movement hopes the new constitution will explicitly enshrine the rights to education, health, decent work, social security and a clean and healthy environment, as well as grant nature the status of a legal entity, obliging the State to protect and guarantee these rights.

The Chilean social movement recognizes that the severe problems and abuses afflicting with sea, its resources and coastal communities can be addressed only through social mobilization and public pressure. This should be an inherent part of the objective of democratizing the country and changing the prevailing neoliberal economic model. If this does not transpire, the current political, legislative and administrative system, derived from the civic-military dictatorship, would present few opportunities for achieving real and structural changes. 3

For more

<https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/chile-artisan-fishermen-vs-industrial-fishermen>

Chile: Artisan Fishermen vs. Industrial Fishermen

<http://www.confepach.cl/>
Confederacion Nacional de Federaciones de Pescadores Artesanales de Chile

<http://www.mundoacuicola.cl/new/tag/condepp/>

Critican que consejos zonales de pesca puedan ser consultados para determinar cuota de consumo humano

<https://www.ecoceanos.cl/>
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