

Rebel with a Cause

In this interview, Honorino Angulo, a fishermen leader from southern Chile, talks about his battle for the rights of coastal communities

In March 2012 he was charged with inciting violence. In June, he was bestowed a human-rights award. Meet Honorino Angulo, a fishermen leader from southern Chile, who has long battled the dictatorial measures imposed in the Pinochet era, which still prevail.

In awarding him the Helmut Frenz medal, the Ethical Committee against Torture commended Angulo for his struggle against the privatization of fishery resources and for defending the right of coastal communities to food sovereignty.

Angulo was one of the leaders subjected to the Internal National Security Law, a law created under the Pinochet regime, for leading last summer's people's protest in Patagonian cities, styled as "Aysen, Your Problem is My Problem", which demanded that the valuable natural resources of the southern region be exploited sustainably for the benefit of citizens.

Angulo's response: "I am not a delinquent. I am a social leader and I will continue to demonstrate until I am 100 years old, God willing."

Excerpts from an interview with this feisty leader:

How did you become a fisherman?

I come from a rural (*campesino*) family which arrived in Patagonia to escape poverty in the countryside. In the 1980s I became an artisanal fisherman, despite not having completed primary education. It was only two years ago that I completed basic-level studies. When I started fishing, we caught *congrío* (kingklip, cusk eel), hake, and manta ray, using for bait species native to our region,

such as *pejerrey* (sandsmelt), sardine and *cabrilla* (wreckfish). But since the arrival of salmon aquaculture in the region, we have lost these smallest of resources (*pejerrey* and sardine). Now we have to depend on other regions to get bait. The salmon industry is a major threat to artisanal fishing. Rearing centres have been established in our region and are polluting all the coastal and marine areas. Large amounts of antibiotics and chemicals are administered to the salmon reared in cages, which are now occupying our traditional fishing areas and polluting the sea.

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Three companies in the southern zone—Pescanova, Nippon Suisan and the Chilean company Friosur—own all the quota of some of our fisheries, like the Patagonian grenadier (*merluza de cola*), and southern blue whiting (*merluza tres aletas*) and 50 per cent of the quota for austral hake (*merluza del sur*) and manta ray. The government wants to give them these quotas in perpetuity. They have never been penalized for overexploiting marine resources nor do they pay taxes for extracting these fishery resources. Worse, a large part of the resources are destined for fishmeal production to feed salmon.

Where do your catches go?

Our catches go to feed people in towns in the region and also in other parts of central and northern Chile.

This interview was conducted by **Patricio Igor Melillanca** (patricio@ecoceanos.cl) of Ecoceanos, Chile. It was translated by **Brian O'Riordan** (briano@scarlet.be) of ICSF

A small percentage is exported for human consumption. But almost all the industrial production goes for fishmeal and oil, and a small percentage for the export markets.

How did you become a leader of fishermen?

I have been a leader for 20 years. I took up the struggle of our fishermen to save our resources, and our work and families. We must feed our families; we must never allow the companies to abuse us. Longueira's Law attempts to hand over fishery resources for life to six families of the country, who have become millionaires through fish, but who have also jeopardized the sustainability of the fisheries. Today our organization—the National Council for the Defense of the Artisanal Fishery Heritage—has 50,000 fishermen as members, including various leaders from CONAPACH and CONFEPACH.

You were one of the leaders of the movement “Aysen, Your Problem is My Problem”, which, at the start of the year, made political demands, calling for better infrastructure, and sustainable exploitation and equitable use of resources. Months later, how do you see the situation in Patagonia?

That movement began by rejecting the law for privatizing the fisheries. The fishermen started demonstrating, and then other sectors began to join in with their own demands, which were very similar. The workers' union joined the demonstration, as did public employees, lorry drivers, health and education workers, and rural labourers from the *campesinios*. The movement was able to highlight forgotten issues, like fair salaries, better health and education infrastructure, and subsidies. The demands of artisanal fishers have been overlooked. We would like a new fishing quota system, modified fishery calendars and a region-by-region revision of the law to privatize fisheries resources.

What is the position of the National Council for the Defense of the Artisanal Fishery Heritage on this law, which gives property rights as individual transferable quotas (ITQs)?

We have mobilized throughout Chile against the government's lack of interest in formulating this law exclusively for artisanal fishworkers. At the moment, the bill favours industrial trawling and the operation of large vessels in Patagonia's internal waters and canals. It does not respect the five-mile zone reserved for the artisanal fishery. We emphatically reject the issue of ITQs and the privatization of the fisheries.

How does the human-rights award from the Ethical Commission against Torture link with the artisanal fishers' struggle?

This award recognizes the rights of the individual, and the freedom to feed oneself. As fishers, we want good-quality resources for our country, especially those produced by the artisanal sector. The award recognizes our struggle for food sovereignty, and we are proud to defend the right to food for all our families and our children. This is why we reject Longueira's Law, which seeks to hand over ownership of these resources to six families. Our struggle to defend our fisheries heritage is society-wide. We can't allow the Economy Minister to take this quality food away from us and hand it over to six of his friends, the industrial fishing companies. 3

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Chile's fisheries Act contents presented