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FEATURED Q&A

Where Is Chile's Conflict With the Mapuche Headed?



Members of Chile's Mapuche community, pictured above, were rocked by the death of community leader Juan de Dios Mendoza Lebu, whose body was found Dec. 31. // File Photo: Telesur.

Q Authorities in the southern Chilean region of La Araucanía are investigating the death of an indigenous Mapuche community leader whose body was found on a rural road New Year's Eve with signs of foul play. Juan de Dios Mendoza Lebu was the highest authority of the Raquem Pillá community, one of several in southern Chile that has been at odds with central Chilean governments over decades of conflict that in recent months has turned increasingly violent. Authorities will investigate whether the alleged crime is related to the complaint made by Mapuche communities about acts of repression by local police. Is the administration of President Sebastián Piñera doing enough to address the conflict? How likely is social unrest to continue or further escalate? What needs to be done to resolve Chile's longstanding issues with Mapuche communities?

A Patricia Richards, Meigs professor of sociology and women's studies at the University of Georgia: "The current Piñera administration has done more to exacerbate conflicts than to resolve them. The same could be said of Bachelet's recent administration, as well as Piñera's previous administration, as well as the governments of the Concertación. What is missing in Chile is the political will to entertain the legitimacy of the claims of Mapuche communities and organizations. These claims are focused on a variety of issues, although the most intense conflicts have surrounded claims for territory and self-determination. In general, the democratic governments of Chile have aggravated the situation by charging Mapuche individuals

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Pentagon Extends Troop Mission to Mexico Border

The U.S. military will extend its mission to support security along the border with Mexico through Sept. 30, the Pentagon said on Monday.

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Millicom Confirms Proposal From Liberty

Colorado-based cable and phone service provider Liberty Latin America has offered to acquire Millicom International Cellular, which operates the well-known Tigo brand in the region.

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Tensions Between Brazil, Venezuela Continue to Grow

A diplomatic spat between Venezuela and Brazil got increasingly personal Monday, when Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro called Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro a "Hitler of the modern era" in his state of the nation address.

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Maduro // Photo: Venezuelan Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Tensions Between Brazil, Venezuela Continue to Grow

A diplomatic spat between Venezuela and Brazil got increasingly personal Monday, when Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro called Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro a “Hitler of the modern era,” Reuters reported. The remark came as Maduro was making his state of the nation speech. The latest dustup between the two ideological opponents stems from Brazil’s declaration last weekend that it will not recognize Maduro as Venezuela’s legitimate president following disputed elections last year. Before taking office Jan. 1, far-right Bolsonaro pledged to act “within the rule of law and democracy” to oppose the governments of Venezuela and Cuba, a complete reversal of foreign policy from Brazil’s governments under the leftist Workers’ Party that ruled from 2003 to 2016 and had warm relations with the socialist countries. In addition to rejecting Maduro’s legitimacy, Bolsonaro said Brazil now recognizes Juan Guaidó, a 35-year-old industrial engineer who has taken over the opposition-controlled and now-powerless

National Assembly, as Venezuela’s leader. On Sunday, Guaidó was on his way to a rally just outside Caracas when he was intercepted by the intelligence police, forced into a van and detained for about 45 minutes, The Washington Post reported. He was released unharmed. In related news, Colombian President Iván Duque said Monday he is talking with like-minded conservative leaders to create a regional bloc that would replace the Venezuelan-influenced Union of South American Nations, or Unasur, the Associated Press reported. In a radio interview, Duque said the proposed group, called Prosur, would focus on defending democracy and free-market economies. Duque announced Colombia’s withdrawal from Unasur in August, and another five countries have suspended their membership to protest Maduro’s government.

Pentagon Extends Troop Mission to Mexico Border Areas

The U.S. military will extend its mission to support security along the border with Mexico through Sept. 30, the Pentagon said on Monday, Reuters reported. President Donald Trump ordered the deployment in October to deter waves of Central American migrants arriving

NEWS BRIEFS

Citigroup Sees Latin America Revenue Up 7 Percent in 2018

New York-based Citigroup said Monday its revenue from Latin America rose 7 percent in 2018, surpassing \$10.2 billion last year, up from \$9.6 billion in 2017. In its Global Consumer Banking unit, Latin America revenues of \$1.4 billion “remained largely unchanged,” the company said, increasing 7 percent, excluding revenues associated with an asset management business in Mexico that was sold in the third quarter of 2018. Retail banking revenues from the region grew 6 percent, while revenue from cards grew 8 percent.

Millicom Confirms Proposal From Liberty

Colorado-based cable and phone service provider Liberty Latin America has offered to acquire Millicom International Cellular, which operates the well-known Tigo brand in the region, Reuters reported Monday. In a statement, Millicom said it has received “a preliminary highly conditional non-binding proposal from Liberty Latin America,” adding that there is “no certainty that a transaction will materialize nor as to the terms, timing or form of any possible transaction.” A tie-up would create one of the largest telecommunications carriers in Latin America, according to the report.

Latin American Banks Less Risky Than European Lenders: Bond Traders

International investors are viewing Latin American banks as less risky bets than European lenders for the first time since the eurozone crisis in 2012, Bloomberg News reported Monday. Investors are demanding higher premiums for Europe’s riskiest bank bonds than those for Latin American lenders amid fears over a possible German recession and a no-deal Brexit, according to the report.

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with terrorism and by militarizing parts of the region. Piñera’s government, specifically, has responded to the conflicts with greater repression and violence, most noxiously in the recent police killing of Camilo Catrillanca in Ercilla in November. Catrillanca was shot in the back by a special-forces unit of the Carabineros known as the ‘Comando Jungla.’ This is a case not of Mapuche terrorism, but, arguably, of state terrorism against the Mapuche. The situation is unlikely to change until the ongoing colonial harms in Mapuche territory (reflected in systemic and everyday racism) are addressed with substantive reparations and respect for Mapuche self-determination.”

A **Maria Velez de Berliner, managing director of RTG-Red Team Group, Inc.:** “Chile’s Mapuches have held grievances against the government and police for more than three centuries. These result from the violence, forced relocation and dispossession caused by the government’s Operation for the Pacification of Araucanía (Region IX). Chile’s National Intelligence Agency and its national police, the Carabineros, target Mapuche activists, political opponents and dissidents. Several Mapuche leaders have been in preventive detention since 2017 without charges or the benefit of counsel. Mendoza Lebu was not alone; others have been found

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in border cities such as Tijuana. The Pentagon said it was “transitioning its support at the southwestern border from hardening ports of entry to mobile surveillance and detection, as well as concertina wire emplacement between ports of entry,” according to the report. About 2,350 troops have been assigned to the border mission. Meanwhile, a high-stakes stalemate over border security continues in the U.S. Congress. [Editor’s note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Dec. 20 issue of the Advisor.]

ECONOMIC NEWS

Argentina to Join Extractive Industries Transparency Group

Argentina is expected to join an international initiative for managing oil, gas and mineral resources, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, or EITI, officials with the group said Monday, Reuters reported. The initiative, which former British Prime Minister Tony Blair launched in 2002, enforces transparency standards that require member countries to report how they allocate licenses in extractive industries and how much they receive from companies in tax and royalties, the wire service reported. It also demands governments disclose beneficial ownership of companies in order to curb tax avoidance. “We are foreseeing that Argentina can come close to applying to become a member,” Fredrik Reinfeldt, EITI’S chairman and a former Swedish prime minister, told journalists in Oslo, Norway. The move, expected as soon as June, could help boost investment in the South American country, which some mining companies see as having murky regulations, according to the report. Fifty-one countries from around the world are part of EITI, though heavyweight oil, gas and mineral producers such as Russia and China have not joined, and the United States pulled out of the transparency initiative in 2017, Bloomberg News reported. “It’s been some quite tough years because the mood in the world is about putting your country first, not relying on multilateralism,” Reinfeldt said.

COMINGS & GOINGS

Morante Joins Kaufman Dolowich & Voluck

New York-based law firm Kaufman Dolowich & Voluck announced on Jan. 2 that Thomas Morante will be joining the firm’s office in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., as a partner and chair of the new Insurance Regulatory and Transactional Practice. Morante was previously a partner at Holland & Knight and co-chaired its insurance industry practice, representing insurance companies, wholesalers, brokers and financial institutions.

Ríos Starts Term as Millicom’s Board Chairman

José Antonio Ríos García on Jan. 1 began his term as the new chairman of Millicom’s Board of Directors, the Luxembourg-based company said. Ríos, who serves as the chief executive officer of Celistics Holdings, serves as a member of the Audit Committee and the Compensation Committee at Millicom. Before joining Celistics, he was the international president of Global Crossing, a telecommunications company that Level 3 Communications later purchased. Last week Millicom announced that its common shares had begun trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market in the United States under ticker symbol TIGO.

Landers Leaves BlackRock for BTG Pactual

Brazil’s BTG Pactual Asset Management has hired Will Landers, BlackRock’s veteran Latin America portfolio manager, Citywire reported last week, citing unnamed sources. Landers oversaw an estimated \$2 billion in assets at BlackRock, according to Reuters. He will be replacing José Zitelmann, a 20-year BTG veteran and managing partner, who plans to launch his own group. A native of São Paulo, Landers joined BlackRock in 2002. Landers’ departure has led BlackRock to appoint Ed Kuczma, a Latin American specialist with over 15 years’ experience, as portfolio manager, according to the report. The firm has also appointed Sam Vecht, a managing director within BlackRock’s global emerging markets team, as co-manager on the U.K.-domiciled BlackRock Latin American Investment Trust, working alongside Kuczma.

Chinchilla, Shannon Named Co-Chairs of the Inter-American Dialogue

Former Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla and U.S. diplomat Thomas A. Shannon, Jr., became the new co-chairs of the Inter-American Dialogue’s Board of Directors on Jan. 1. Chinchilla was president of Costa Rica from 2010 to 2014, the first woman elected to that office. She previously served as the country’s vice president and justice minister and in Congress. Shannon joined the United States Foreign Service in 1984 and has since served in several embassies around the world, including as ambassador to Brazil. Most recently he served as undersecretary of state for political affairs. Chinchilla and Shannon replaced former U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills and former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo as the organization’s co-chairs.

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dead also under questionable circumstances. Formal investigations still await in limbo. Central to the Mapuches' fight for ownership of Araucanía is the fact that it contains the largest forest reserves of Chile and is home to powerful political and economic agribusiness. Despite the government's redistribution of lands to the Mapuches since 1993, they remain unsatisfied and restive. Mapuches continue to seize lands, occupy land illegally, destroy roads and infrastructure and stop valuable agriculture from reaching consumers, locally and abroad. Those actions led former President Bachelet to reinstate Pinochet's anti-terrorism law in 2007, which President Piñera expanded during his first term and during his current second term, failing to subdue the Mapuches, who will continue protesting and destroying until their grievances are redressed. A solution to the mutual violence will require negotiations monitored and assisted by neutral parties who can help the Mapuches and the government reach a middle-ground acceptance of the limitations inherent in each other's demands and expectations. Suspicious deaths and arbitrary detention of Mapuches is not conducive to this conflict's resolution, nor is the continuing destruction of interests vital to Chile's economy and government by Araucanía's Mapuches."

A **Robert Funk, assistant professor at the Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Chile:** "Mendoza Lebu's death has not really made the headlines, which remain dominated by the misinformation and mishandling of the Catrillanca case. One of the striking things of the Piñera administration is how it gets itself into serious trouble while the country enjoys a strong economy and a weak, divided and unpopular opposition. The administration should be dominating. Instead, it is responding badly to crises such as the one in Araucanía. This is especially unfortunate since, prior to the killing of Catrillanca, the government, through Social Development Minister Alfredo

Moreno, was making slow but good progress in establishing a dialogue between important stakeholders, some of whom had not previously sat together. The key to progress with the Mapuche nation—indeed, with all its indigenous communities—is a major shift

“Chile must recognize the special status that indigenous people have within its society.”

— Robert Funk

in attitudes, both public and institutional. Chile must recognize the special status that indigenous people have within its society, and indigenous groups must recognize that their territories are part of a large unit called Chile. But this will require dialogue, probably years of it. There are, of course, extremists who have an interest in dynamiting dialogue, and the challenge is to move forward regardless. The instinct is to halt everything when a tragedy like what happened to Catrillanca occurs. In this sense, the government has been astute in making Moreno, a former foreign minister with strong links to the business sector, responsible for the negotiations. Where Piñera has been weaker is in confronting the way the police—the Carabineros—handles its relations with indigenous groups and, indeed, all forms of popular protest."

Editor's note: The Advisor sought a commentary for this Q&A from Fernando Sáenz Taladriz, the head of Chile's National Corporation for Indigenous Development, or CONADI, but did not receive a reply.

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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