

## Chile: The state as a rapist macho

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On 18 October 2019, people took to the streets in Chile. The rise in the Santiago Metro fare was the straw that broke the camel's back, and it was the high school students who sparked off the protest, calling on the population to evade paying the fare by jumping over the turnstiles at the entrance to the trains. Santiago has 7 million inhabitants, it is very segregated socially and spatially, workers travel two hours and more in collective locomotion to get to their jobs. The call encouraged thousands of students and workers to evade payment and stop traffic on the streets. The government responded with repression through a "state of emergency", a curfew, and the military in the streets. There was destruction of subway stations, attacks on pharmacies, bank branches, and supermarket chains.

On 27 October 2019, over a million people in Santiago participated in the "March of History," demanding that the government take the military out of the streets, withdraw its neoliberal reform proposals from Congress and call a Constituent Assembly to draw up a new constitution, chanting "Chile woke up". The police and military incurred serious and multiple human rights violations, including eye injuries and loss of vision, harassment and sexual

abuse against youth, women and people of diverse sexual identities in police stations, but the mobilizations continued, week after week, paralyzing traffic and occupying a central plaza transformed into the "Plaza de la Dignidad".

Chile, a successful example of neoliberal policies, which President Sebastián Piñera described as "an oasis," was stripped naked by social revolt, leaving the costs of neoliberalism, its social and therefore political unfeasibility, in plain view. The government had to backtrack on its measures and on 24 November 2019, in the midst of great tension, the majority of the political parties reached an "Agreement for Peace and the New Constitution" opening a way out of the serious social crisis. This agreement was supposed to calm the waters, but the mobilization of the social movements were maintained and also the police repression, justified by the "maintenance of public order".

Then "LasTesis" came on the scene, a small group of feminist students who, on the occasion of the international day of action on violence against women, on 25 November, performed "Un violador en tu camino" in the city of Valparaíso. In a few verses, accompanied by drums, they explain that at the root of all the

violence suffered by women is the patriarchy, which judges women at birth and punishes them with violence, that the State maintains through its institutions – government, parliament, justice, police – and is therefore an oppressive and rapist male.

Dancing and singing took over the protests, thousands of women gathered in squares and buildings to point out the State as responsible for all the violations, not only of women, but of all the human rights of the population, through, fundamentally, the precarity of life and violence. The forms of expression of the protest changed, and it became common sense that a society cannot be thought of without women. Hence, after arduous battles by a wide range of feminists – movements, parties, academics, jurists, parliamentarians – Congress agreed, along with the reform that allows for a plebiscite to be called at the end of 2020 to approve constitutional changes, that this democratically elected constitutional body will have gender parity.