

Chile's President Gabriel Boric, Venezuela and the Question of Human Rights

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At the meeting of South American presidents in Brasilia, the Chilean representative criticized the human rights situation in Venezuela.

Since his inauguration as President of Brazil in January 2023, Lula da Silva has endeavored to relaunch the process of regional cooperation in a fragmented and divided continent.[1] To this end, he organized the South American Summit, which brought together the zone's presidents on May 29 and 30, 2023, to strengthen integration and dialogue between the various nations, including Venezuela. This country has been subject to extremely severe economic sanctions imposed by the United States for years, which seriously undermine the fundamental rights of Venezuelans.[2]

President Lula denounced the ostracism and the political, economic, diplomatic and media warfare against Venezuela, pointing to "the narrative that has been built up against Venezuela, of anti-democracy, of authoritarianism", particularly for ideological reasons. He also criticized the double discourse of certain countries: "It is very strange [that] the demands of the democratic world vis-à-vis Venezuela are absent for Saudi Arabia".[3]

Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou and Chilean President Gabriel Boric criticized Lula's comments on Venezuela. While the conservative Uruguayan leader's stance came as little surprise, that of the center-left Chilean leader aroused more incomprehension. The latter insisted on "the pain of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who are today in our homeland", without saying a word about the US economic sanctions that are suffocating the country and are the main cause of this exodus. "Human rights must always and everywhere be respected", he concluded.[4]

Two realities call into question the sincerity of the Chilean leader's concerns. Firstly, Amnesty International's latest report on the human rights situation in Latin America is damning for many countries. Based on the factual reality of this study, it is not possible to point the finger specifically at Venezuela on this issue. Human rights violations are

numerous and serious throughout the continent.[5]

Secondly, to set oneself up as a judge, it is essential to have the necessary moral authority. However, Amnesty International's latest report on Chile in 2022/23 should have prompted Gabriel Boric to show more humility. Indeed, the institution denounced the impunity enjoyed by state agents responsible for "human rights violations". AI also pointed out that the forces of law and order had been guilty of "crimes against humanity" and "torture and other ill-treatment" during the 2019 social crisis. Similarly, AI reported numerous "arbitrary arrests": "Many [people] were acquitted for lack of evidence after spending long periods in pre-trial detention". AI also reported cases of "torture and other ill-treatment" of patients at a psychiatric hospital and stressed that, far from prosecuting those responsible for these crimes, "the Valparaíso public prosecutor's office has asked for the case to be dropped".[6]

In front of the cameras, Gabriel Boric had expressed his compassion for Venezuelan migrants and refugees. In reality, however, this was an insincere posture for the press. Amnesty International has denounced violations of "the rights of refugees and migrants" in Chile. "The authorities have resumed immediate expulsions of foreigners without assessing their need for international protection".[7] AI even sent an open letter to Gabriel Boric expressing its "grave concern about the situation of people in need of international protection at the border between Chile and Peru", denouncing the "deployment of armed forces and the establishment of a state of emergency", measures contrary to "Chile's international obligations".[8]

In view of all this, Gabriel Boric does not have the moral authority to comment on the human rights situation in Venezuela. His statements are motivated more by political considerations and the desire to curry favor with certain sectors than by genuine concern for Venezuela's fate. If the Chilean President is concerned about the well-being of the Venezuelan people, he should condemn the US economic sanctions against Caracas and demand their immediate lifting.

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Notes

[1] *Voz of America*, « Presidentes sudamericanos buscan mayor integración en Brasil », 29 May 2023. <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/presidentes-sudamericanos-buscan-mayor-integracion-en-brasil/7113727.html> (Accessed 1st June 2023).

[2] *Ministério das Relações Exteriores*, « Consenso de Brasília », 30 May 2023. https://www.gov.br/mre/pt-br/canais_atendimento/imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/consenso-de-brasil-2013-30-de-maio-de-2023 (Accessed 1st June 2023).

[3] *BBC News Mundo*, « 'No es una construccion narrativa, es la realidad' : las criticas de los presidentes de Chile y Uruguay a Lula por sus palabras sobre Venezuela », 31 May 2023.
<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-65762357> (Accessed 1st June 2023).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Amnesty International*, « Rapport annuel 2022/23. La situation des droits humains dans le monde », 27 March 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/documents/pol10/5670/2023/fr/> (Accessed 1st June 2023).

[6] *Amnesty International*, « Rapport annuel. Chili 2022 », 27 March 2023.
<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/location/americas/south-america/chile/report-chile/> (Accessed 1st June 2023).

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Amnesty International*, « Chili et Pérou. Lettre ouverte à la présidente Dina Boluarte et au président Gabriel Boric », 4 May 2023.
<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2023/05/chile-y-peru-carta-abierta-a-la-presidenta-dina-boluarte-y-el-presidente-gabriel-boric/> (Accessed 1st June 2023).

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