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Chile

Constituent Social Movements bloc advances environmentalist and feminist demands in Chilean Convention

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Movimientos Sociales Constituyentes (Constituent Social Movements- MSC) has positioned itself as one of the most important forces within Chile's Constituent Convention. [1] The group is made up of 13 constituent members, 11 women and two men, who have a long history in defence of the environment and in feminism. Since the Convention was set up, they have managed to initiate important debates there regarding the interpretation of parity and the mechanisms of popular participation in the constituent process.

Its members are Alejandra Flores (District 2), Cristina Dorador (D3), Constanza San Juan (D4), Janis Meneses (D6), Carolina Vilches (D6), Alondra Carrillo (D12), Alvin Saldaña (D15), Gloria Alvarado (D16), María Elisa Quinteros (D17), Bastián Labbé (D20), Vanessa Hoppe (D21), Manuela Royo (D23) and Elisa Giustinianovich (D28).

Giustinianovich is the group's representative on the presiding committee, since she shares one of the eight vice presidencies of the Convention, while Royo represents them in Human Rights, Alvarado in Budget and Dorador in Decentralization.

MSC's main objectives are to put human rights at the centre of constituent work, advocate for the freedom of political prisoners and promote the refoundation of the state, leaving behind the neoliberal subsidiary model, to build a pluri-national, decentralized system that guarantees access to social, economic, cultural and nature rights.

Before the Constituent Assembly was set up MSC was already forming useful links with other groups of independents, such as members in reserved seats and the Lista del Pueblo, together with those who formed the Vocería de los Pueblos, one of the first bodies of articulation of independent convention members of different origins. As the weeks passed, the bond was tightened, and a bloc was formed together with Chile Digno (Social Green Regionalist Federation and Communist Party).

Since then, MSC has established itself as an important force in the Convention, often receiving the support of the Frente Amplio, Colectivo Socialista and Independientes No Neutrales.

Popular sovereignty

The political engine of MSC, as its name implies, lies in the desire to provide popular sovereignty to peoples and transform the social, cultural, political and economic model. "We are united by the desire to generate radical transformations, with collective, diverse, popular, pluri-national, feminist, ecological, anti-capitalist, decolonizing and dissident force," says the Manifiesto of the collective.

According to the document, MSC is "a political articulation of social, union, union, environmental, feminist, territorial and first nations organizations" that came together after the popular revolt and which together with the constituents – who function as spokespersons in the Convention – seeks to transform the system, with nature and territories being protagonists of this process.

The MSC's links with the defence of the environment and the territories have a long history. The Movement for the Defence of Water, Land and Environmental Protection (Modatima) has Carolina Vilches and Manuela Royo as

representatives of the organization.

Vilches was elected by District 6, which includes the Quintero-Puchuncaví-Ventana zone, where an industrial complex borders the coast with thermoelectric power plants, copper smelting and refinery centres, natural gas and oil regasification terminals.

The District is also composed of the Province of Petorca, an area that has been experiencing a water crisis for many years as a result of the exploitation of water used for avocado monoculture. As a result, more than 3,000 people are supplied with water by tanker trucks that travel through the valley three times a week. And it is in this area where Vilches in 2016 founded and ran the Water Affairs office of the province of Petorca, the first office of its kind in the country.

Manuela Royo, a member of Modatima Wallmapu and lawyer for the organization, testified in March 2021 before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in a public hearing on the defence of water resources. Also, this member has defended Mapuche who have been imprisoned and involved in actions such as Operation Hurricane.

The convention member Constanza San Juan was involved for years in the movement against the Pascua Lama mining project of the Canadian mining company Barrick Gold, which was cancelled after years of resistance from the Diaguita communities and the surrounding inhabitants.

Elisa Giustinianovich also has a record in the defence of ecosystems in the Magallanes region, where she has promoted the decarbonization and protection of the Tres Puentes wetland. In the southern region, Giustinianovich was a member of the Feminist Coordinator of Magallanes, an organization with which they built the Feminist Parliament of Rebel Patagonia.

Feminist guidelines

Although feminism is one of the common guidelines of all MSC conventions, Alondra Carrillo is one of the most recognized figures of feminist activism. She was spokesperson for the Feminist Coordinator 8M (CF8M) between 2018 and 2020, a year with a historic March 8 that brought together more than one million women in Santiago.

From this space, discussion was promoted, culminating in the correction of the interpretation of parity that was being used in the Convention, where initially the concept was applied as a ceiling for the participation of women. The same logic operated in the conventional elections held in May 2021 so that 10 women who obtained the majority of votes in their lists had to cede their quota to a man to meet the criterion that both sexes must be represented in a proportion of 50% each.

The MSC convention members criticised this interpretation, indicating that parity is a mechanism that seeks to repair the historical marginalization of women from political and public space, so it cannot be used as a limitation, but as a minimum floor. In this way, the Convention bowed to the proposal of the MSC, accepting that from now on the limit of 50% maximum applies only to men, while for women it is the basis. This sets a precedent for future bodies where parity criteria will be established.

Other relevant initiatives proposed by the collective which led to an important political discussion in the Convention concerned the search for binding mechanisms of popular participation. In this sense, the MSC manifesto mentions

that through articulation and organization with communities, movements and territories they seek to “build an inclusive space, capable of bringing together historically invisible popular diversity to build pluri-national power, which allows us to be a deliberative and binding voice in decision-making.”

As a consequence, the collective, together with other spaces of the Convention, approved in the Popular Participation Commission the holding of direct plebiscites as a mechanism of direct and binding participation between citizens and the constituent process. Although the initiative was approved with votes from all sectors except Vamos por Chile, it is still an open discussion that has to be put to a vote in the plenary to be established as a rule.

Translated by [International Viewpoint from Interferencia](#).

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[1] The Constitutional Convention is the constituent body of the Republic of Chile in charge of drafting a new Political Constitution of the Republic after the approval of the national plebiscite held in October 2020. Its creation and regulation were carried out through Law No. 21,200, published on 24 December 2019, which amended the Political Constitution of the Republic to include the process of drafting a new constitution. The body met for the first time on 4 July 2021. See "[From the electoral conjuncture to the recovery of popular initiative](#)".