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Chile: Disappearance of Mapuche indigenous leader Julia Chuñir Catricura

On 8 November 2024, Mapuche indigenous leader **Julia Chuñir Catricura** disappeared from Huichaco, on the border between the Máfil and Los Lagos communes, in Chile's Los Rios region. She was last seen by a friend when leaving her home for a walk to the nearby Lafrir estate.

[Julia Chuñir Catricura](#) is a Mapuche woman human rights defender and President of the indigenous community of Putreguel of the Máfil commune, in the Los Rios region, Chile. She is well-known in her community for her work in the defence of the Mapuche territory in face of attempts from external actors to appropriate the community's lands for private use.

On 8 November 2024, Julia Chuñir Catricura left her house to go to the Lafrir estate where she keeps her farm animals. Since then, her whereabouts are unknown. On 10 November 2024, the son-in-law of Julia Chuñir Catricura was alerted by one of the woman defender's friend about her disappearance. He proceeded to contact the authorities, who initiated a missing person investigation. Since then, the search for Julia Chuñir Catricura has been mainly led by her family and neighbours, with the support of the Investigation Police (PDI) of Los Rios and the fire brigade teams. During the initial search, only some footprints were found at an abandoned cabin, which the family claim belong to the woman human rights defender herself. No more footprints indicating her next destination were found, but some tyre marks were also present at the scene. The end of the official search is expected to happen soon, with no clear information given to the family so far about its status or process.

According to the family of the Mapuche leader, some days prior to her disappearance, Julia Chuñir Catricura had received threats from private actors to leave the land. Those private actors seek to take ownership of the land of an indigenous community where the defender was, with their authorization. The woman defender has refused ceding the territory since it was bought by the National Corporation for Indigenous Development (CONADI) and cannot be used by any person that is not of indigenous descent. Julia Chuñir Catricura's family also reported that she had received previous threats coming also from landowners in the region due to her work in defence of indigenous lands.

Front Line Defenders expresses its serious concern at the disappearance of indigenous leader Julia Chuñir Catricura, and believes it is linked to her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights, in particular the defence of indigenous people's land rights in Chile. In addition, Front Line Defenders echoes the family concerns at the lack of results of the investigation carried out so far and urges for throughout communication with family members in that regard.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Chile to:

1. Take all necessary measures to determine the whereabouts of Julia Chuñir Catricura and guarantee her physical and psychological security and integrity;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of Julia Chuñir Catricura, as well as the threats and attacks against her, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Chile, including indigenous human rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.