

OPEN LETTER

(Translated)

October 22, 2019

Mr. Sebastian Piñera Echenique
President of the Republic

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people,...
Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

Psalm 85:8a, 10-11 (NRSV)

Dear Mr. President:

It is with great respect, yet with honesty, based on the situation that our country is currently living that sister and brothers of diverse evangelical and protestant churches, together with other ecumenical and social organizations grouped in the "Network for Life and Dignity," we come to convey our deep pastoral concern about the way your government is processing these events.

We reject the violence and actions of vandals, which have costed the lives of at least 11 persons and caused the irresponsible destruction of countless public and private property essential to the quality of life of all the citizens. It is certainly resounding and unequivocal. Yet, we cannot accept the rejection means "there is no room for explanations," as the Minister of the Interior has stated with your name attached.

It is precisely the incomprehensible refusal to give space to explanations, to listen to numerous voices who have wanted to contribute or interpret the discontent, which have in turn made your government choice the path of "putting out the fire with benzine," as it was early and clearly stated by a well-respected journalist, while exclusively concentrating on the state of emergency declaration, which brought out the military to the streets.

Unless there is some intelligence information that has not been shared publicly, there is no evidence that we are confronting a declaration of a planned war, as expressed by the General Iturriaga. The pattern of vandalism, once the protest overcame the initial acts concentrated at the Santiago Metro Station, is the same that followed the earthquake and tsunami of 2010, a situation that was not planned, but provoked an immediate collapse of communications, making difficult to coordinate intensive rescue efforts. This comparison is not overused, or just simply rhetorical, but it does permit us to verify the discontent that has undoubtedly been expressed these last few days, since we have seen its growth since the beginnings of the decade, as efficiently recognized by many of your very own political sectors.

What we have expressed above is evidence that previous governments are responsible for the amount of discontent of the people, and it's certainly a shared responsibility of the National Congress that the citizens carry with those feelings during that time. But your government is responsible for minimizing the aspirations of deeper changes orientated toward the surmounting the scandalous inequality, like if these were just political proposals foreign to the "needs of the people." Now, it is evident that thousands of people are tired of feeling invisible.

We completely agree on the gravity of the moment and the need to have a unified response from all the powers of the State, all the political sectors, civil society, church, and religious communities, and finally, all the citizens. It is our moral obligation to share with you that the only way of achieving that unity will be by making a convincing gesture of true empathy with feelings and emotions that are overwhelming the citizens. It will not be possible to reestablish the public order, and the proper governing without establishing confidence, and it will need to be not just from your government, but also other political sectors, to make a true recognition of the gravity of the situation and ask for forgiveness for the lack of capability to discern the enormity or depth of outrage of our citizens. The reestablishment of the fulfillment of

human rights is, without a doubt, a fundamental first step to begin the constructive dialogue, which will permit the advancement of the needed social transformation in Chile.

On our part, we recognize that our prolonged silence also makes us accomplices and co-responsible for the accumulated tensions. It is because of this, that we humbly commit our prayers and actions in search of peace and justice, asking our Lord of Life to help us all to rediscover the path of respect, sanity, and citizen responsibility.

We share our farewells, declaring our full disposition to be added to the initiatives of dialogue or public actions where the crossing of paths in search of understanding, as long as they are based on mutual respect and empathy before the tiredness and civil anger.

- Pastor Pedro Zavala—Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chile (IELCH)
- Pastor Izani Bruch, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chile (IELCH)
- Mrs. Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí, Pentecostal Feminist Theologian and Latin American Council of Church (CLAI)
- Pastor Daniel Godoy, Rector, Theological Evangelical Community of Chile (CTE)
- Pastor Jorge Merino Riffo, Bishop, Methodist Church of Chile (IMECH)
- Mrs. Sonica Covarrubia Kindermann, Popular Education Foundation of Health (EPES)
- Pastor Juana Albornoz Guevara, Apostolic Mission Church (IMA)
- Mr. Raúl Rosales, Ecumenical Center Diego de Medellín (CEDM)
- Mr. Nicolas Panotto, Director, Multi-disciplinary Studies on Religion and Public Incidence Group (GEMRIP)
- Mrs. Arianne van Andel, Ecumenical Coalition for the Care of Creation (CECC)
- Mr. Juan Gamboa and Mr. Daniel Parra, Coordinators, CEB Oscar Romero South
- Rev. Jorge Zijlstra Arduin, President, Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI)