
Chilean women occupy empty mine to protest job losses, 2010

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) people of color](#) [1]
- [\(mainly or initiated by\) women](#) [2]

Timing

November 16,
2010
to:
November 30,
2010

Location and Goals

Country:

Chile

Location City/State/Province:

Lota, Biobio Region

Location Description:

Empty mine

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

1. Reinstitute the employment program for those who had been laid off
2. Include the program in the 2011 national budget as a form of assurance

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 034. Vigils
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 034. Vigils
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 034. Vigils
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 4th segment:

- 034. Vigils
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 162. Sit-in
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 5th segment:

- 034. Vigils
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 162. Sit-in

Methods in 6th segment:

- 034. Vigils
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 162. Sit-in

Segment Length:

2-3 days

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Workers who were laid off from a post-earthquake employment program

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Spokeswoman Brigida Lara

Partners:

Supporters and unemployed laborers

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Not Known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Unemployed Chileans

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

2-3 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Chilean government

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Not Known

Repressive Violence:

Not Known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

1 point out of 3 points

Total points:

4 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

The campaign received a 2 because although they were able to reach a deal with the government for a new employment program, the deal will provide significantly fewer jobs than are needed. This was a short campaign and there was not a formal organization supporting it. Furthermore, the campaign lacked much outside support, but gained the support of other unemployed people in the area.

On February 27, 2010 a magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck Chile and was soon followed by a tsunami. In total, there were as many as 800 deaths and \$30 billion in damage because of the earthquake. Following the earthquake, much of Chile was ravaged and thousands of people were left unemployed. In response the Chilean government began instituting employment programs in the Bio Bio, Maule, and O'Higgins regions, where unemployment rates were particularly high. The programs paid residents to help rebuild their communities and to clear rubble from the towns. However, on November 4, the government discontinued the program that was being operated by the Military Workers Corps (CMT), and 9,500 people were subsequently laid off in O'Higgins and then 8,000 more in Bio Bio and Maule.

In response to this sudden severance of employment and financial support, a group of women who had been working through the program decided to descend 500 meters into an unused mine and staged a protest. The mine was called “El Chiflon del Diablo,” the Devil’s Draft, and is in Lota, Chile, 500 kilometers south of Santiago. The mine was no longer in production and instead was being used as a tourist attraction.

The women put forth two demands for the Chilean government. The first was to reinstitute the employment program for those who had been laid off. The second was that, as a form of assurance, the women wanted the government to include the program in the 2011 budget, which was being debated in Congress at the time.

The 33 women were replicating the plight of 33 miners who were trapped in a mine in San Jose in Northern Chile for two months earlier in the year. The 33 men were trapped 700 meters underground on August 5. The dramatic rescue operation of the “Atacama 33” in October of 2010 was broadcast live around the world and drew significant international attention. The women, who were wearing work uniforms and miners’ helmets, said that they were asking the government to show attention towards them and help them, just as they had helped the “Atacama 33” a few months prior.

Soon after entering the mine on November 16, 2010, the women began threatening a hunger strike. Spokeswomen for the campaign were stationed at the entrance to the mine and communicated with the press and government officials. In addition, about 200 supporters and other unemployed laborers kept vigil at the opening to the mine.

Within a few days some of the women, most of whom were middle-aged, began showing physical signs of the strain. Eventually four of the women had to leave the mine and end their occupation because of health threats. During this time negotiations continued between the campaign spokeswomen and government officials. Eventually, the women representatives and the officials reached a deal that the government would create programs to provide job opportunities in the area. By November 30, the remaining 29 women who were in the mine ended their occupation and hunger strikes, and exited the mine. However, the deal that they ended up with, called the Urban Improvement Program, will only provide a projected 2000 jobs to the area, far fewer than the needs of the working class in the region and the 12,000 jobs that were lost in the program cuts.

Research Notes

Sources:

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Sachie Hopkins-Hayakawa, 24/04/2011

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