

Dear Boric,

My name is Asel Luzarraga Zarrabeitia, a Basque writer who lived for a year and a half in the Araucanía Region between 2009 and 2010. More specifically, I had to live nine months in freedom and another nine deprived of my liberty by the Chilean State, the result of one of the frequent police plots to frame innocent people which the Chilean State has been accustomed to undertake for decades to get rid of political inconveniences.

In my case, the investigation, subsequent judicialization and expulsion from the country was due to my writing and my public anarchist affiliation, but as I have already described all of this in a book – *The Good Don't Use Umbrellas* – which, in addition to the Basque Country and Argentina was, of course, first published in Chile, permit me, through my lawyer Jaime Madariaga, to send you a copy, in case you wish to learn about the case in more detail. Along with this book, I am also sending you the translation published in Chile of my work of fiction – *The Lie in the Blood* – that the aforementioned events and my brief stay in Chile inspired and that I began to write during my confinement in Temuco penitentiary.

There are two main reasons why I am writing to you at this time.

On the one hand, after having been imprisoned; widely portrayed as a terrorist by the Chilean government – both by the governments of President Michelle Bachelet that fabricated a case against me, and by that of Sebastián Piñera which consummated the sentence – and by the mainstream Chilean media; convicted in a farcical trial in which the acquittal threshold of reasonable doubt was ignored wholesale throughout; forced to abandon a territory where at that time I felt rooted and had a desire to remain indefinitely; and finally included in Interpol lists as an ex-convict linked to terrorist acts, my case has remained open since in 2011 as we have filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) against the Chilean State about the irregularities and arbitrariness surrounding what happened to me at every moment. The intention is to reverse its main effects – the continued prohibition on my entering Chilean territory and my inclusion in the aforementioned Interpol lists – and to remedy the damage caused to my public image and my life.

After the case was declared admissible by the IACHR at the end of 2019, it fell to your government to respond to the report presented by us, and perhaps I should say that it has not been surprising to see that the government you lead has given the same response as its predecessors, endorsing the same policy of covering up the repeated and well-known acts of police-political persecution disguised as anti-terrorism. It was an opportunity for your government to reflect on how to begin to remedy human rights violations committed by the Chilean State and the role that the government itself should play in such situations, an opportunity that was sadly wasted. I still remember the moment when my preventive detention was lifted, in February 2009, just a week before the fateful earthquake, and how as I left the court, away from the crowd of journalists, a member of the Communist Party sent me from Santiago the solidarity of his party in the form of a warm hug, because outside of the oligarchic right and the government of Michelle Bachelet in Chile, few people doubted – and still doubt – what is really behind cases like mine. Given the response that

your government office sent to the IACHR, it would seem that the political class forgets what it believed a few days before assuming government responsibilities.

On the other hand, in December 2019, after the admissibility ruling on the case, from the Basque Country we launched the campaign "Asel terrorista? "Mesedez!" ("Asel terrorist? Please!"), within which, and thanks to the selfless contribution of various people, the English edition of the book that now reaches your hands has been released in the United Kingdom and the United States. Of course, this launch will include a new campaign to disseminate the cause, and in it, among other things, we will report on the attitude that the current Chilean government maintains in cases like mine.

For all these reasons, it seems to me that this is an unmissable opportunity for the government that you lead to take an unambiguous position on cases like mine, which are sadly abundant. The IACHR itself, in its ruling in the so-called Lonkos case, has already condemned the actions of two of the judges who signed my sentence, and it was the Chilean authorities themselves that have pointed out members of the Carabineros responsible for organizing and physically perpetrating the set-up against me as being suspected of forming a network dedicated to framing people in cases similar to mine, within Operation Hurricane, that also included the main prosecutor in my case, Sergio Moya.

This being so, what I have come to request from you through my lawyer, Jaime Madariaga, is certainly *not* a pardon, something that is absurd. Since this madness began, my only objective has been to bring to light the truth: that my arrest and the charges against me were the result of a police-political set-up directed from within the structures of the Chilean State itself, and that my case is merely one more of those that have been occurring with impunity in Chile for decades. A pardon implies an assumption of guilt that is the opposite of my intentions, and furthermore would not bring me any benefit: legally I would continue to appear convicted for acts which I had nothing to do with, and my name would remain on a list which has become a headache when it comes to taking any trip to leave the Schengen area, making it directly impossible for me to enter many territories. Furthermore, of course, a pardon would do nothing to compensate me for the damage suffered, and would be of no help to the many people who have suffered and are currently suffering from the political repression of the Chilean police forces.

I believe, however, that there are at least two related paths that your government could take in this case to help repair the damage in which, I assume, you do not wish to be complicit.

One would be for the government to seek to settle the case already open in the IACHR, since the deadline is still open for the Chilean government to withdraw from the case and negotiate a ruling that recognizes and corrects the errors committed and the damage caused. Continuing to move forward with the claim before the IACHR under the same script in use until now and enclosing it in the perverse logic of defending the interests of the State would position you as president and your government as a faithful successor of your predecessors and hence as a concealer of the truth.

However, my case is not the only one, and the majority of people persecuted for their legitimate struggles and subjected to being framed in the same way as I was surely do not have the possibilities open to a European citizen to fight comfortably from home without feeling their lives to be in constant threat. The terrorism of the Chilean State did not end with the Pinochet dictatorship and its trail of victims continues to stretch across the horizon. For this reason, I think it should be the responsibility of your government to open an independent commission of investigation so that all the people who have been politically persecuted and suffered police set-ups during the last few decades can give their testimony without fear and the actions of the people involved from different entities – judges, prosecutors, police officers etc. – can be investigated without hindrance. That would be an act of justice, compared to the acts of revenge that states have accustomed us to.

I hope I have not bored you or taken up too much of your time with this letter, and that you enjoy reading the books, whatever path you take on this topic. Of course, the tenor of the response I receive will speak for itself when we launch the international dissemination campaign of *The Good Don't Use Umbrellas*, the cover of which I attach.

With respectful greetings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' and 'L' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Asel Luzarraga Zarrabeitia