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Nagy, Gergő Máté

Institution: Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary (International Relations MA Program)

Country of origin: Hungary

Email: gergomatenagy @ gmail.com

From Wallmapu to Palestine: The Symbolic Entanglement of Mapuche and Palestinian Decolonization in the Context of the October 7 Gaza War

In the aftermath of Hamas's October 7, 2023 terrorist attack against Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza, various Indigenous communities across Latin America mobilized in solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian civilian victims of the conflict. Among these groups, the Mapuche people – living in present-day Chile and Argentina – stand out not only for their use of symbolic elements in pro-Palestinian demonstrations (e.g. the display of Mapuche and Palestinian flags) but also for the discursive strategies through which they, often alongside members of the Chilean Palestinian diaspora, have intertwined their own decolonization struggles with the Palestinian cause. Today, multiple parallels can be drawn between the conditions of the Mapuche and the Palestinians, rooted in shared histories of colonialism. A central argument of this presentation is that Wallmapu (the Mapuche territories in Mapudungun) and Palestine should both be understood as “unfinished decolonization projects,” where subaltern groups recognize their struggles for autonomy or independence as part of a global anti-colonial resistance. By applying the postcolonial school of International Relations, this presentation seeks to compare the Mapuche and Palestinian conflicts, demonstrating how solidarity gestures, emerging in response to the war in Gaza, reflect the use of “(counter)storytelling” and “weaving collective fabrics of struggle” as tools in their respective decolonization processes.

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