



PARLAMENTO RAPA NUI · MANA RAPA NUI FOUNDATION

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Rapa Nui Nation Calls on Chile to Withdraw Reform That Would Open Ancestral Land to Mortgage and Sale

President Kast's proposed change to Indigenous Law 19.253 would allow the sacred land of Easter Island to be leased and mortgaged to outsiders — and would strip the same protection from the Mapuche and every other Indigenous people in Chile. The Rapa Nui Parliament has filed an urgent appeal with the United Nations.

RAPA NUI (EASTER ISLAND), CHILE — June 4, 2026 — On 1 June 2026, in his first Cuenta Pública (state-of-the-nation address), President José Antonio Kast announced a reform to Chile's Indigenous Law 19.253 that would remove longstanding protections on indigenous land, allowing it to be leased and mortgaged on the same terms as ordinary property. Presented as a policy of “freedom,” the change would, for the first time, expose ancestral Rapa Nui land to foreclosure and to long-term lease to parties outside the community.

For the Rapa Nui — a Polynesian people more than 3,700 kilometres from the Chilean coast — the land is not a tradable asset. Rapa Nui holds more than 1,000 moai, over 700 ahu (ceremonial platforms), and more than 25,000 archaeological and sacred sites, and is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Indigenous Law 19.253 itself defines indigenous land as “the principal foundation of the existence and culture” of the people.

“What is presented as freedom is, for our Nation, a road to dispossession,” said Erity Teave Hey, Vice President of the Rapa Nui Parliament. “Once ancestral land can be mortgaged to a bank, a single unpaid debt can transfer it forever to outsiders. Our land is the resting place of our ancestors and the inheritance of our children. It is not for sale — and it never was.”

The relationship between Rapa Nui and Chile rests on the 1888 Agreement of Wills, which exists in two non-identical versions: the Spanish text proclaimed a cession of sovereignty, while the Rapanui-language text ceded neither sovereignty nor land. Chile's own Commission for Historical Truth and New Deal (2003) recorded that the Rapanui text “does not speak of ceding land or its property.” In 1933 the State nonetheless registered the entire island to its Treasury as “land without owner.”

The threat is not Rapa Nui's alone. Indigenous Law 19.253 — won through decades of Mapuche-led struggle after Chile's dictatorship — is the statute that shields the lands of all of Chile's recognized peoples (Mapuche, Aymara, Rapa Nui, Atacameño/Lickanantay, Quechua, Colla, Diaguita, Chango, Kawésqar, Yagán and Selk'nam) from sale, mortgage, lease and seizure. Stripping that protection would expose every Indigenous territory in the country to dispossession through the market — an existential threat to peoples for whom land is the foundation of identity and survival. The Rapa Nui Nation stands in solidarity with the Mapuche and all of Chile's first peoples in rejecting it.

The Rapa Nui Parliament has submitted an urgent appeal to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The situation is already before the Inter-American Commission on

Human Rights (Petition P-172-15) and was addressed in the 2013 concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/CHL/CO/19-21).

The Rapa Nui Nation is calling on Chile to withdraw the reform, conduct free, prior and informed consultation under ILO Convention 169, and uphold its obligations under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A public petition is open at manarapanuifoundation.org.

About: The Mana Rapa Nui Foundation is a U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to the health, cultural preservation, and land rights of the Rapa Nui people. The Rapa Nui Parliament is the traditional representative authority of the Rapa Nui Nation.

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