Chile
Brazil

comics as eyewitness
July 2021

1st year update

front line defenders
cypher
/'sɪfər/
The dictionary definition of cypher is ‘a secret or disguised way of writing’. In many ways, this is the essence of comics storytelling – the image, rather than the word, is a disguise for many words, that can convey meaning, emotion, and can re/frame an entire narrative.

Rap and hip hop culture has taken the word and ascribed a new meaning: ‘an informal gathering of rappers, beatboxers and/or breakdancers in a circle, in order to jam musically together.’ This, too, we find relevant to this project, in that we are bringing together artists and HRDs in freestyle collaboration of activism and art with the aim of informing, elevating and inspiring.

For us, this captures the spirit of why we are working in comics and guides how we facilitate the process of creative production.
This issue marks the beginning of the second year of production of Cypher. This initiative has been a learning opportunity for us all, and one that has been an incredible experience in bringing together artists and human rights defenders to present their work and stories in a different format than the reports and statements that human rights organizations, including Front Line Defenders, usually produce.

After this month’s stories, we have included some updates to stories that appeared throughout the first year of the ‘zine and hope you find going back to those stories as interesting and important as the new stories we continue to produce.

Thank you again for your interest in and support of this initiative.
One year of Cypher – WOW.

This gathering of artists, Human Rights Defenders, academics, administrators and readers is happening for a whole year now. We come together in our disciplines to cross over; to weave visual stories often too cruel to witness, but witness we must. The comics and visual stories we have been publishing – and will continue to publish - are meant to spread the word globally. Those killings and murders, harassments, physical, socio-economical and mental attacks on those who are ‘an inconvenience’ for those in powerful positions aren’t just ‘local events’ in some far away places no one ever has heard about. Greed, political or financial, isn’t patriotic and bound to borders. If we believe that, we fall for the old “look at what you’re doing in your own country” rhetoric, popularized by autocratic, corrupt and despotic rulers around the world. To gather in a circle and ‘rap’ is to break the silence and to break this pattern of ‘forget about it, it doesn’t concern you’. If profit and greed are international, so is resistance and solidarity.

Adam asked me a year ago if I knew what to cypher meant in the world of Rap and Hip Hop. I didn’t. Now I do.

July 2021
Brazil is one of the most lethal countries in the world for environmental activists and human rights defenders. Historically, the state of Pará has registered the highest rates of violence related to agrarian issues in Brazil; located in the Amazon region, it is the most violent state for land rights defenders. The episodes vary from evictions of rural workers, riverside communities or quilombolas; illegal mining, logging and occupation of indigenous areas; destruction of property and assets; physical attacks; arbitrary detention, criminalization and killings.

On 24 May 2011, land rights defenders José Cláudio Ribeiro and María do Espírito Santo were shot dead in an ambush by gunmen on the road leading to the settlement project where they lived. Both were local leaders of the Praia Alta-Piranheira Agro-extractive Project, located in Nova Ipixuna, Pará State. The settlement was home to about 500 families who produced and lived off that land, coexisting in harmony with the forest.

Weeks before they were killed, José Claudio and Maria suffered an attempted killing in their home. In November 2010, at an international conference in Manaus, José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva expressed concern for their safety, as a result of threats he had received, and predicted that he would be killed as a result of his work. José Cláudio and Maria informed the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the name of loggers from Jacundá and Nova Ipixuna, who were pressuring the settlers and had invaded their lands to illegally remove timber. An investigation was opened against a number of loggers in the region, and IBAMA (Brazilian Environmental Agency) even conducted research that detected illegal logging in the settlement region, which resulted in the closure of a number of illegal sawmills. Despite denouncing the threats they suffered to the authorities on several occasions, José Cláudio and Maria do Espírito Santo never received police protection.

Their struggle inspired many environmental rights defenders, among them José Claudio’s sister and Maria do Espírito Santo’s sister-in-law, Claudelice Santos. Claudelice was one of the nominees for the 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, presented by the European Parliament.

The threats and murders of human rights defenders in Pará are endemic to the business practices of mining, logging and cattle ranching in this region, and indeed across the country, because resource extraction and agribusiness are prioritized over the lives of rural populations, indigenous communities and quilombolas.
More than faith, Mary had hope that we could live on the manna of life...

Which provides sustenance!

Holy Spirit? He was always with her on her name...

And indeed witnessed her courage and her willingness!
JOSÉ, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS THE ADOPTIVE FATHER OF A SECULAR BEING. THIS BEING FED COUNTLESS FAMILIES FOR YEARS ON THAT LAND, LAND THAT TODAY IS UNDER GREAT THREAT.

SEE YOU LATER, MAJESTADE!

DEAR CHESTNUT TREE

LIVE FOR ANOTHER 600 YEARS!

*MAJESTADE* MEANS "MAJESTY", BUT HERE IS REFERRING TO THE NICKNAME OF THE 600 YEAR OLD CHESTNUT TREE, TO WHICH JOSÉ WAS VERY ATTACHED.
MARIA, MY SWEETHEART, WE HAVE TO GO!

I KNOW, I AM SO AFRAID!

BUT SOMEONE MUST DO IT!

I HAVE LIVED IN THE FOREST SINCE I WAS SEVEN. IT IS THE FOREST THAT HAS ALWAYS FED ME AND IF THEY CUT IT DOWN THEY HAVE TO CUT ME DOWN FIRST.
WHERE THE BUSINESSMEN SEE ONLY FIGURES, MARIA AND JOSÉ SAW NOTHING BUT LIFE. THE LIFE OF THE FOREST AND OF THOSE WHO INHABIT IT. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS PERSPECTIVE IS SLOWLY BEING SWALLOWED UP.

ACCORDING TO THE LOGIC OF THE SLAVE, IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO PROVE ONESelf NECESSARY. LOGGERS AND LANDOWNERS, WHO LIVE AT THE EDGE OF THE LAW, KNOW THIS VERY WELL.

AS A SLAVE IT IS NOT UNCOMMON TO SEE FAVOURS WHERE THERE IS MISERY.

IN THE EYES OF THE HUNGRy, FOOD IS A MIRACLE

AND A MIRACLE IS SOMETHING THAT COMES FROM GOD.

HOW GOOD IT IS TO PRACTICE KINDNESS, WHAT WOULD THESE PEOPLE BE WITHOUT THE FOOD I SERVE THEM?
I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU.

I NEED YOU TO DO IT.

WORK HARD AND YOU WILL BE WELL REWARDED!

MY BROTHER PLEASE DO IT IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS...

...THE PROGRESS OF OUR FAMILY!!!
NATURE DOES NOT SPEAK, BUT WITNESSES... WELCOMES

AND SO SHE CARRIED THE SOULS OF ZÉ CLAUDIO AND MARIA TO WHERE THEY ALWAYS BELONGED

TOGETHER WITH THE FOREST.
Perhaps José did not see himself as a father of the forest, nor Maria as her mother, but their struggles adopted many, and many adopted their struggles.

**Our peace comes from our fight for justice.**

Convicted!

And justice is served...

We finish another pilgrimage of the forest martyrs, in the hope that the people honoured here will be the last ones to be honoured.

The desire for justice does not rehabilitate the unjust, it prevents new sacrifices.
When José and Maria were taken from us, some people made a commitment to pursue justice.

As time went by, I realized that my mission would not only be to seek justice for the murders of my brother and sister-in-law, but also to continue the struggle of many ancestors who defended the forest.

She, Claudelice, was one of these people.

The only thing we can do is not panic, so we don’t stop our fight!

I found in books the necessary strength to fight against crimes in the rural areas.

After graduating in agroecology, science proved to me that it is possible to live off the forest in a sustainable way.

I joined other women to combine our efforts to value not only the forest but also the people who live in it.
They have cut down one, two trees, but another thousand, five thousand, will be reborn. This is how we will be able to make the world a place with hope, with people seeing the future with wishful eyes and without fear of losing their lives to the chainsaws of greed and evil, of those who do not agree with the idea that the environment is life, and that those who defend it also deserve to live.

Text: Marcelo Borary
Art: Ty Silva
Chile

Mapuche human rights defenders in Chile face an increasing struggle for the protection of their native land and traditional way of life, as many of their leaders find themselves facing criminalisation, imprisonment and torture. Mapuche women HRDs are often in the front line of protests, and face both state repression and gender-based violence.

Nora Ñancul and Gricel Ñancul are women human rights defenders and Werkenes who defend the rights of the Mapuche people in the Likankura autonomous Lof. They are known for their commitment to the revitalisation of Mapuche identity, knowledge and customs and for their defence of indigenous land rights and encouragement of the Mapuche peoples’ spiritual and social reconnection to their land. Nora Ñancul and Gricel Ñancul have spent most of their lives fighting for the recuperation of indigenous land occupied by State or private interests, including some occupied by the company Forestal Mininco at CollipulliCommune in the Malleco Province in Araucanía. The community of Likankura represented by the Ñancul sisters have denounced the company for a violation of land rights and have affirmed that they have no other option except for the pursuit of peaceful land requisitions in order to once again provide enough sustenance for their community.

Mapuche resistance against large scale illegal deforestation is mostly concentrated within the Araucanía region, a sacred place for the Mapuche with a rich landscape comprised of ancient forest. However the region is also one with the highest rates of multidimensional poverty in Chile. The country’s economic model based on privatised resource extraction—backed by a high degree of militarisation—has played a central role in the disenfranchising of Mapuche people, principally through violations of indigenous, environmental and land rights.

Artist: Marcela Trujillo / Maliki

www.marcelatrujillo.cl
THE ÑANCUL SISTERS

DRAWING & SCRIPT: MARCELA TRUJILLO (MALIKI)
STORY & GLOSSARY: ONÉSIMA LIENQUEO
Funkey! Funkey! Funkey!

MMM... LET'S SEE...
SOME MAKI FRUIT, FO-YE SPRINGS, TRIWE LEAVES, PÆWEN NUTS...
I THINK WE HAVE EVERYTHING.

Chomp, Chomp, Chomp!

Don't leave without me!

Last one there has to row!

Hello boat

Mari mari lamngen

Hello boat

Boat, boat

Boat, boat!

Boat, boat!
Spirit of the River, we have to row upstream, will you help us go faster?

Mari Mari
Ngen Leifu!

Newenkeelen

Matuke

Matuke

Matuke

Wooooaaa

Uluuuuu

Giiii

Matuke

Matuke

Ngen Leifu

Ngen Leifu
MATUKE

CHAL-TU-MAY NGEN LEIFU

I'M FLYING!

CHAL-TU-MAY

MARI MARI LAMNGEN

¡AUCH!

PU PICHÌ NANCUL

MARI MARI NGURU, WOULD YOU TAKE US TO THE MOUNTAIN?

NGEN WINKUL
THANK YOU NGURU WE ARE GOING TO THE MOUNT OF GREAT KIMUN

MARI MARI NGEN KULUN JI JI JI JI

WUF WUF WUF

IT SEEMS LIKE THEY'RE STILL SLEEPING

THE PANGUI ARE ALREADY DOWN THERE

HOP OVER HERE WITH ME LAMINGEN

‘NUKE’ ‘NUKE!

‘GROAR!’
Pewma Pewma

¡Yaaaaawwnn!

Lamngen Nora... The Girls, The Basket,
Nguru, Pangu, Pillan

Wake Up Nuke!
MARI MARI LAMNGEN. COME ON, GRISEL, THE GIRLS ARE BACK!

MARI MARI NGEN PANGUI

INUKE, INUKE! WE FLEW AROUND ON THE BOAT MATUKER!

MARI MARI NUKE

MOM WE FILLED THE BASKET!

LET'S TAKE VALERIAN... MMM... FOR THE PEOma

MARI MARI GIRLS

ZZZ
How big and brave these girls are!

Piwnkenteeyu

Pangui, take us to my Púneñ

Ngúrun, if you stop, we get tired. Pangui knows the way.

Púneñ

We're coming to see you.

BROTHER. WE BRING A LOT OF DELICIOUS THINGS FOR YOU.
Nuke how close we are?
Can you feel ngen leifu?
We are almost to the top.

Dear puñen here we are
Mari mari chemamul
MARI MARI CHEMAMUL

MARI MARI PU PICHI NANCUL

MARI MARI NEPHEW

MARI MARI COUSIN

MARI MARI

MARI MARI PU LAMNGEN

MARI MARI ÑUKE

BROTHER, WE PICKED SOME HERBS AND FRUITS FOR YOU TO SMELL

PUÑEN THOSE FLOWERS ON YOUR CHEMAMULL ARE VERY NICE

MMM ... VERY NICE, IT SMELLS LIKE HOME, PU LAMNGEN

CHALTUMAY LAMNGEN

¡INGURU!
i, ik, ik, ik, ik, ik!
MININCO is cutting down the native forest.

We can't let Mininco destroy our Ñuke Mapu!

Pu Lamngen bring our Ùkülla.

Bring the Trariwe and the Trape-Lakucha too.

Let's go down.

Grrrr!

Mai Ñuke.

Mai Ñuke.
'Come on Lamngen, let's stop Mininco'

Pu Pangi, take us fast.
PULAMNGEN
STAY UP HERE.
DON'T FOLLOW US.
IT IS DANGEROUS.

HURRY
PANGUI, TO
THE NATIVE
FOREST.

NGEN
MAWIDA

NGBRUG
GO FIND MY
BROTHER AT
THE GARDENS
AND HELP
THEM.

WE WILL SEND
THEM ENERGIES.

KULTRUN

PEÑI

TUUUUU

TUM-TUM, TUM-TUM, TUM-TUM,

TUM-TUM, TUM-TUM,

YA, YA, YA

YA, YA, YA
MARU MARU PIÑEÑE

¿P U
LAMNGEN?

¿WHAT NGURU?!
PLEASE TAKE ME TO
THEM NOW

YAI,YAI,YA
YAI,YAI,YA
YAI,YAI,YA

MATUKE NGURU
MININCO IS DANGEROUS,
WE MUST HELP THEM
IK, IK, IK, IK, IK, IK!
STOP!

MINIMO
DON'T DESTROY
OUR ŃUKEMAPU
NO MORE!!

NGEN
MAWIDA LIVES
IN EVERY TREE
YOU CUT

IŠIKE

IK, IK, IK,
IK, IK, IK,
TUM-TUM, TUM-TUM,

IK, IK, IK,

IK, IK, IK,

IK, IK, IK.

If you refuse to hear us, then we will not let you destroy the forest! Let's go!

ISIKE

ISIKE
TUM-TUM, TUM-TUM...

TURN THAT MACHINE OFF AND LEAVE OUR NGEN MAWDA BE!
IK, IK, IK
IK, IK, IK, IK
IK, IK, IK

NO! LET HER GO
MINICO, YOU MURDERER

YA, YA, YA, YA
YA, YA, YA, YA

¡NORÁ!

¡NUKENTU!

ISIKE
ISIKE
ISIKE
INETE
ISIKE
ISIKE

¡LAMNENG!
STOP ISIKE! ENOUGH WITH THIS VIOLENCE, STOP!

LAMNGEN ČHUMLEYMI?
KUMELKALEN LAMNGEN

Iiik, iiik, iiik

HOLD ON, NO RA, THE MOUNT OF GREAT KIMUN AND THE LAWEN WILL HEAL YOU

¿ÑUKE CHUNLEYMI?
¿ÑUKE CHUMLEYMI?
Nøchi pu lamngen be careful...

Nuke, let's go fetch lawen

Chumylem tāni lamngen?
PEUMA PEUMA

PEUMA PEUMA

Nuke wake up breakfast is ready

Pu Lamngen, I'm going to tell you a dream that I have.

Where my brother, my cousins and I in it, Nuke?

Yes, there were many ngen too.

It's important to tell our peum, Lamngen, this is how we receive messages from our ancestors.

The End
The Mapuche sisters, Nora and Grisel Ñancul, have spent 10 years defending the forests and rivers from the presence of loggers and hydroelectric plants that attack the values and spirituality of the Mapuche people.

Both live in the Likankura territory in Collipulli, reclaimed land from the Forestal Mininco company, working the land, replanting the forest with native trees and protecting the spirit of the Renaico River.

As a result, they have suffered violent physical attacks that have caused them to have scars from being shot on their bodies.

In 2019, Nora was attacked with a chainsaw by an employee of Forestal Mininco that left her severely injured, with multiple wounds on her arms and chest.

However, they have been subjected to criminalization by the Chilean police and the state of Chile.

Recently, in September 2020, one of their children of 14 years old was beaten and dragged in the mud by the police leaving him with a broken nose. The sisters were arrested, assaulted and prevented from receiving medical attention and were exposed to the cold. Grisel was handcuffed in detention overnight.

Today a criminal complaint is being carried out accusing the Chilean investigative police of torturing the sisters.

Onésima Lienueco, woman human rights defender of indigenous children's rights.

In my role as an educator and work defending the territory, I meet these two great women, who work to recover the forest and the river, for their children and for all Mapuche children.
GLOSSARY MAPUDUNGAN/ENGLISH

A
AMULEPE: CONTINUE
AMUY: TO GO
ANUMKA: SPROUTS

CH
CHALTUMAY: THANKS
CHEMAMUL: WOOD PEOPLE
CHUMLEYMI: HOW ARE YOU?

F
FUNKEY: FRUITS

I
ISIKE: INSECT

K
KAPU TXAPELAKUXA: METAL
FEMALE GARMENT
KIMUN: WISDOM
KULLIN: ANIMALS
KULTRUN: MUSICAL INSTRUMENT FOR CEREMONIES
KUMELKALEN: I'M ALL RIGHT

L
LAMNGEN: SISTER
LEIFU: RIVER

M
MAI: YES
MARI MARI: HELLO
MATUKE: FAST
MAWIDA: FOREST

N
NEWEN:
NGEN: PROTECTOR SPIRIT
NGURU: FOX

Ñ
NOCHI: SLOW
NUKE MAPU: MOTHER EARTH
NUKE: MOM

P
PANGUI: COUGAR
PEWMA: DREAM
PICH: SMALL
PILAN: VOLCANO SPIRIT
PUKENIEEYYU: I LOVE YOU
PU: PLURAL
PUÑEN: SON

T
TAÑI: MY
TXARINE: BELT LOOM

U
UKILLA: FEMALE KNITTED BLANKET

W
WINKUL: HILL
On 30 June 2021, Hong Kong woman human rights defender and lawyer Chow Hang-tung was re-arrested after the police revoked her bail, under which she was released from an earlier arrest on 4 June 2021. She is facing the charge of “inciting others to knowingly participate in unauthorized assemblies” in relation to events on 4 June to commemorate the anniversary of the Tienanmen massacre and 1 July to mark the return of Hong Kong to Chinese control in 1997. The August 2020 edition presents a story of pro-democracy activism in Hong Kong inspired by Tienanmen.
Pakistan

In November 2020, Talia Khattak, daughter of imprisoned Pakistani HRD Idriss Khattak, was brought to visit her father, who she had not seen for a year. She was taken to Mangla Cantonment, a Pakistani military garrison in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, to the house where her father was being held. In February 2021, the Peshawar High Court ruled against Khattak’s petition challenging the military’s jurisdiction to detain and charge him, allowing a military trial to proceed. The story of Idriss’ forced disappearance, as told by Tania, was in the first edition of Cypher in July 2020.

Turkey

In July, President Erdogan removed the rector of the Bogazici University whom he had appointed in January. The students, alumni and the academic have been fighting against the “appointed rector” since that day, resulting in hundreds of arrests, at least 5 legal cases, beatings, attacks, injuries and travel bans. Their resistance was one of the stories in the May 2021 issue. Unfortunately, measures taken against students and faculty have persisted, with many of them now challenging dismissals, etc. in administrative and legal processes.
Iraq

The October 2020 edition presented the 2020 Front Line Defenders Award winners, including Fatima Al-Bahadly from Iraq. On 24 July, Fatima’s son Ali Karim, was kidnapped and the next day his bullet-riddled body was found, having been murdered. Fatima has received threats to her and her family for years, but has continued her activism despite the wave of killings against HRDs.

Italy - TAP

On 19 March 2021, the Lecce Court of First Instance found 67 human rights defenders from the No-TAP Movement in Italy guilty on charges of unauthorized protest, damage to private property, resistance to and contempt toward public officials and interruption of public service in three different legal cases. They were issued sentences ranging from three months to three and a half years imprisonment and/or fined up to €4280. A further 25 human rights defenders also on trial were acquitted. The story of No-TAP was presented in the September 2020 issue.
Find us online

frontlinedefenders.org/cypher