

AI Index: PRE 01/134/2009
07 April 2009

Peru: The conviction of Fujimori – a milestone in the fight for justice

The conviction of former President Alberto Fujimori is a crucial milestone in the struggle against impunity in Peru and shows that nobody is exempt from being held to account, Amnesty International said today.

“Justice has been done in Peru,” said Javier Zúñiga, Amnesty International’s observer at the trial. “This is an historic day. It’s not every day that we see a former head of state being convicted for human rights violations such as torture, kidnapping and enforced disappearances. We hope that it’s just the first of many trials in both Latin America and throughout the world.”

“Now it is vital that all those responsible for human rights violations committed in Peru, including those perpetrated prior to the government of Alberto Fujimori, be brought before the courts,” said Javier Zúñiga. “Enforced disappearances, torture and rape are crimes that are not subject to statute of limitations if they are committed on a widespread basis, as happened in Peru.”

The statement came in the wake of the verdict reached by the Special Criminal Division of Peru’s Supreme Court with regard to investigation of the cases of Barrios Altos (in which 15 men, women and children were extrajudicially executed in 1991), La Cantuta (in which nine students and a university lecturer were kidnapped and later killed in 1992 by members of the Colina Group, a paramilitary force within the Peruvian Army) and the SIE basements (where two kidnap victims were held). The decision, which was unanimously adopted by the three presiding judges concluded that former President Alberto Fujimori, bore individual criminal responsibility in all three cases because he had effective military command over those who committed the crimes.

Background Information

Amnesty International has been closely following the trial of Alberto Fujimori through local and international observers. At the start of the trial, the organization met with the Special Criminal Division, the Prosecutors, the lawyers acting for the claimants and the lawyer representing the accused. So far, the organization has received no information from any of the parties to the trial to suggest that it was not conducted in an independent and impartial manner.

Furthermore, Amnesty International has incontrovertibly established that under the government of Alberto Fujimori serious human rights violations and crimes against international law – such as torture, killings and enforced disappearance – which, given their widespread and systematic nature, constituted crimes against humanity, were committed. The organization also found that prior to 1990 human rights violations were widespread and systematic in nature.

The judgment handed down today can be appealed by the defence or the prosecution.

An Amnesty International delegation consisting of Special Adviser, Javier Zúñiga, and Legal Adviser, Hugo Relva, travelled to Lima to observe delivery of the verdict in the trial of Alberto Fujimori.

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