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## **Pinochet case -- No question now: extradite or prosecute**

**London** -- The case for extradition or prosecution in the UK is now stronger than ever, Amnesty International said, as the hearings to determine whether Augusto Pinochet will be extradited to Spain closed today in London.

“The arguments in favour of bringing Augusto Pinochet to trial have, once again, shown their strength during this hearing. We have strong faith that -- if the legal process is allowed to continue free from political interference -- the victims will get justice,” stressed Javier Zúñiga, Director of the organization’s Americas Research Program.

“We await the magistrate’s decision with a great deal of expectation, but also with very high hopes that justice will be done.”

It is important to remember which are the issues that Mr Ronald Bartle, Deputy Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, has been asked to consider:

Is the crime on which Spain wants to try Augusto Pinochet an extraditable offense recognised by British legislation? -- The UK House of Lords has already ruled that it is.

- Are the charges against him linked to a “political crime” ? -- Under the 1989 UK Extradition Act -- and under international law -- torture is clearly not a political crime for the purposes of extradition.

“Given the clarity of UK law in this regard, we are confident that Ronald Bartle will reach the right decision as indicated both by local and international law,” said Javier Zúñiga.

“It is now beyond argument that the UK authorities have no option but to hand Pinochet over to the Spanish authorities or to open a prosecution in this country.”

Amnesty International -- which recently called on New Scotland Yard to make public if it is investigating Augusto Pinochet over the torturing to death of people in Chile during his rule -- has repeatedly stressed that under the European Convention on Extradition, rejecting Spain’s extradition request and failing to prosecute in the UK is simply not an option.

“Given the crimes Augusto Pinochet is accused of -- torture and crimes against humanity -- there are no legal grounds that would permit the UK to deny his extradition to Spain, unless the UK decided to prosecute him here,” Javier Zúñiga concluded.

The UK Attorney General’s chambers have confirmed to Amnesty International that any UK investigation and prosecution would follow normal legal process -- with the police gathering evidence and then passing the case to the Crown Prosecution service. ENDS.../