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Pinochet case: One step closer to justice

The right outcome by human rights principles and by law, Amnesty International said today, welcoming the announcement by Roland Bartle, Deputy Chief Stipendiary Magistrate, that Augusto Pinochet can be extradited to Spain.

“We have had every confidence from the outset that if the legal process was allowed to continue -- free from political interference -- the victims and their relatives would day by day get closer to justice,” said Javier Zúñiga, Director of the organizations’ America Program.

Roland Bartle’s decision to allow extradition to proceed on the basis that torture is an extraditable offence recognised by UK law was, according to Amnesty International, the only possible result as dictated by international and local law.

Under the European Convention on Extradition -- of which the UK is a party -- all state parties undertake the obligation to surrender to each other all persons against whom the competent authorities are proceeding for an offence.

Had the magistrate decided not to extradite Augusto Pinochet, the UK would have had -- under Article 7 of the UN Convention against Torture -- to “submit the case to its competent authorities for the purpose of prosecution.”

“Today’s decision represents another significant step in a remarkable case that has moved human rights into a new era,” Javier Zúñiga said.

“It is also an important achievement for each and every individual -- in Chile and outside Chile -- who refused to bury the memory of those tortured, killed or “disappeared” during the military government.”

Amnesty International is carefully studying the text of the decision and intends to make a more detailed comment in the near future concerning its implications.

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