

AI INDEX: EUR 45/39/99  
8 October 1999

## **Pinochet case: "One law for one world"**

Magistrate Ronald Bartle's words when delivering his decision on Pinochet's extradition to Spain say it all, Amnesty International said: "There will be one law for one world".

After studying the text of the decision, the organization described it as "a fundamental step forward towards universal respect for human rights in the new century."

"This decision sends a powerful reminder to prosecutors and courts all over the world," Amnesty International said. "They have a duty under international law to exercise universal jurisdiction over persons who are suspected of torture in their territories, or to extradite them to states able and willing to give them a fair trial."

According to Amnesty International's legal experts, the decision solidly lays the ground for the consolidation of an international system of justice in the long fight against crimes against humanity, and gives a new hope to the victims and relatives in their long search for truth and justice.

One key aspect of this verdict is that it leaves the door open for Pinochet's extradition on all 35 cases of torture submitted to his consideration and, significantly, on the 1.198 cases of "disappearance".

"It has always been Amnesty International's view that the court should permit Pinochet to be extradited for all the charges presented against him, and that "disappearance" amounts to long term torture. Today's ruling gives tremendous backing both to that view and to the rights of the thousands of people who have been "disappeared" not only in Chile but all over the world," Amnesty International said.

For the next steps of this notable case, Amnesty International reiterates to the UK authorities their international obligation to proceed with Pinochet's extradition or to submit the case to the competent local authorities for the purpose of prosecution in this country (under Article 7 of the UN Convention against Torture).

"Today's decision contributes to the seachange that has taken place in international law in the past year," Amnesty International said. "No longer are cases of torture seen as political crimes to be dealt with by politicians and diplomats, but as crimes to be prosecuted by courts of law."

### **Additional information**

Magistrate Bartle determined that on the basis of his findings he is satisfied that all the conditions are in place to oblige him under the terms of the UK Extradition Act 1989 to commit Augusto Pinochet to await the decision of the UK Secretary of State Jack Straw.

ENDS.../