

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 22/009/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 214
26 August 2004

Chile: a major step towards justice

The Chilean Supreme Court has shown its commitment to truth and justice, Amnesty International said today following the decision of Chile's highest court to confirm the lifting of Augusto Pinochet's immunity from prosecution in relation to his accountability for "Operation Condor".

The Court's decision opens the way for Augusto Pinochet to be brought to justice in the same way as any other citizen. This is an important step which will restore confidence in the judiciary following two decades of delay in facing up to human rights violations committed during the years of military government.

The ruling is the culmination of the tireless work of lawyers, human rights organizations and relatives who have persevered despite numerous drawbacks and postponements. This decision offers renewed hope that their long struggle has not been in vain.

"In order to fight against the impunity, prevalent since the period of military government, it is vital that the executive, legislative and judicial authorities take action."

"The human rights violations -- "disappearances", torture and extrajudicial executions -- which were carried out during the military government of Augusto Pinochet in Chile constitute crimes against humanity and those responsible must be held to account. The Supreme Court's decision is the first step to achieving justice and sends a powerful message to all perpetrators of human rights violations," Amnesty International concluded.

Background Information

In a close vote -- 9 votes to 8 -- a plenary session of the Supreme Court decided to lift Augusto Pinochet Ugarte's immunity from prosecution. Chile's highest court ruled to lift the immunity enjoyed by Augusto Pinochet as former president, therefore opening legal means to press for his trial for human rights violations committed in the so-called "Operation Condor" during his government.

"Operation Condor" was a plan coordinated by the military governments of the Southern Cone -- Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay y Paraguay - - to eliminate their "opponents" during the 1970s and 1980s.

Public Document

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