

BRAZIL: COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO "DISAPPEARED" AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED

The fate of over a hundred people "disappeared" in Brazil after being taken into custody in the 1970s should be established and the final findings made public, Amnesty International said today.

"The victims' families are still waiting to learn the truth of what happened to their loved ones," the human rights organization said. "It is absolutely imperative to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the fate of the 'disappeared'."

On Monday 24 July a Justice Ministry spokesman announced that the Brazilian government is about to send a draft bill to Congress which would officially recognise the death of some 144 "disappeared" during the period of military rule (1964-85) and pave the way for relatives of victims to seek compensation from the government.

This announcement following the recent resurgence of public debate in Brazil on the fate of the "disappeared", was one of a number of issues raised by Amnesty International's Secretary General, Pierre Sané, when he met with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso during a visit to Brazil in March this year.

"Whilst we welcome this announcement, the organization calls for a commission of inquiry to be established with full powers to investigate not just the fate of the 'disappeared', but also hundreds of others who died in circumstances that indicate extrajudicial execution or torture," Amnesty International said.

Among the international human rights standards cited by Amnesty International in calling for a commission of inquiry, was Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which in paragraph six stipulates:

"an investigation [...] should be able to be conducted for as long as the fate of the victim of enforced disappearance remains unclarified"

With careful investigation and the cooperation of the Armed Forces it is still possible to discover the truth about the fate of the "disappeared" and the circumstances of the death of hundreds of political activists during the years of military rule, Amnesty International said.

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