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Argentina: Amnesty welcomes sentence but calls for resources to find López

Amnesty International today said the sentences against former military General Luciano Benjamín Menéndez and his subordinate Antonio Bussi are further testimony that crimes such as torture and disappearances have no place in today's world.

"The sentences against Bussi and Menéndez are proof of the steps Argentina is taking to deal with its past," said Susan Lee, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

Antonio Bussi and Luciano Benjamín Menéndez were given life sentences for the kidnapping, torture and disappearance of former senator Guillermo Vargas Aignasse in April 1976.

Amnesty International also called on the Argentinean authorities to take more effective action to protect witnesses and allocate all necessary resources to the investigation of the disappearance of Jorge Julio López – who has been missing since 17 September 2006, after he acted as a witness in a separate trial of the former Director of Investigations of the Buenos Aires Province Police, Miguel Etchecolatz.

Background Information

During Argentina's military government (1976 to 1983) thousands of people were "disappeared", extrajudicially executed and tortured. More than 9,000 people are officially listed as having disappeared during the military's systematic crackdown on leftist opponents; however, human rights groups have estimated the number of victims to be 30,000. The 1986 Full Stop Law (*Ley de Punto Final*) and the Due Obedience Law (*Ley de Obediencia Debida*) of 1987, which protected the security forces from prosecution, were declared null and void in June 2005.

Luciano Benjamin Menéndez (81) was the commander of the regional Third Army Corps in Córdoba and controlled one of the regime's most notorious torture centres. Antonio Bussi (82) led military operations in Tucumán and eventually governed the province after the 1976 military coup. Córdoba and Tucumán were among the most affected areas by human rights violations during the military regime.

Menéndez, six other former military officials and one civilian were also convicted in July 2008 for the kidnapping, torture and extrajudicial executions of four people in 1977.

To mark the 25th International Day of the Disappeared on Saturday 30 August, Amnesty International has developed a series of media materials, including features, facts and figures and case studies on disappearances ranging from the 1970's in Latin-America to today in countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka. For more information please visit www.amnesty.org . to arrange an interview with one of Amnesty International experts, please call: +44 7778 472 116.