



News Service 98/95

AI INDEX: AMR 22/06/95
31 MAY 1995

CHILE : LETELIER RULING -- 'A BLOW AGAINST IMPUNITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS'

Yesterday's Supreme Court's landmark ruling on the Letelier-Moffit case is an important blow against the impunity for gross human rights violations committed in Chile during the military government of General Pinochet, Amnesty International said today.

"The ruling raises expectations of further trials concerning human rights violations in Chile between 1973-78 and gives hope to scores of families who are awaiting continued judicial investigations into the fate of the "disappeared" and of those who were extrajudicially executed," the human rights organization said.

The Chilean Supreme Court ruled to confirm the seven and six-year prison sentences respectively of General Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda, former director of the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional DINA (Directorate of National Intelligence), and Brigadier Pedro Espinoza Bravo, DINA's chief of operations, for the assassination of former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier and US citizen Ronnie Moffit in Washington DC in 1976. The ruling was on an appeal by the two defendants against their 1993 conviction by a lower court for the Letelier-Moffit killings.

Many other cases of human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" during the government of General Pinochet (1973-90) remain before the courts, but efforts to bring those responsible to justice have been thwarted by a 1978 Amnesty Law.

Amnesty International has called for the 1978 Amnesty Law to be repealed, and for those found responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice. The organization opposes any measures that impede clarification of the truth in cases of human rights violations and believes that the way in which the 1978 Chilean Amnesty Law has been interpreted in recent years contravenes fundamental principles of human rights law.

ENDS\