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BOLIVIA: FORMER PRESIDENT TO BE EXTRADITED FROM BRAZIL TO FACE 30-YEAR JAIL SENTENCE

Amnesty International welcomes last week's decision by Brazil's Supreme Court to allow the extradition of former Bolivian president, General Luis García Meza, to face his 30-year prison sentence in Bolivia for crimes including human rights violations.

"The national and international significance of such developments cannot be underestimated," Amnesty International said. "To see that someone responsible for gross human rights violations cannot escape justice is a victory for those who have campaigned and who continue to campaign for the protection of human rights, not only in Bolivia, but across the world."

The sentences passed against Luis García Meza and his collaborators brought to a close the seven-year *Juicio de Responsabilidades* (Responsibilities Trial); the accused were found guilty on charges ranging from misappropriation of public funds to mass murder.

Luis García Meza had been a fugitive from Bolivian justice since 1989, but was arrested in March of this year in São Paulo, Brazil, following an anonymous tip-off, and was found to be in possession of a false Brazilian passport.

He had been sentenced *in absentia* in 1993 by Bolivia's Supreme Court to 30 years in prison for charges relating to human rights violations perpetrated between July 1980 and August 1981, the period of his military government. Amnesty International sent an observer to the trial and concluded that it met international standards for fair trial.

When passing the 30-year sentence -- the maximum allowed under Bolivian law and without the right to any kind of pardon -- the Bolivian Supreme Court stated that the former president should serve his term at Chonchocoro maximum security prison near the country's capital, La Paz. Following the Brazilian Supreme Court decision, arrangements should be made within the next 60 days for the General's transfer to Bolivia.

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