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Paraguay: Human rights should not be disregarded in the name of security

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It is essential for human rights to be protected when it comes to ensuring the security of Paraguayan society. The death penalty is a clear violation of fundamental rights, Amnesty International said today in response to proposals for the death penalty to be restored in the country.

The call for the death penalty to be put back into the Paraguayan Penal Code was made following confirmation of the murder of Cecilia Cubas, the daughter of former President Raúl Cubas, on 17 February.

Amnesty International was very sorry to learn of the murder of Cecilia Cubas and expresses its condolences to her family while at the same time condemning her killing which has caused them great suffering. It also calls on the national authorities to fight crime by ensuring that the country's institutions, especially the police and the justice system, attain the requisite levels of competence and independence so that there is no need to deal with violence by introducing a form of punishment which should not be considered in a civilized society.

"The death penalty is not only an unfair, arbitrary and irreversible form of punishment. It also has no particular deterrent effect and there is an inherent risk of executing innocent people in the event of judicial error," Amnesty International said.

118 countries throughout the world have abolished the death penalty under the law or in practice. In Paraguay the death penalty was banned in the 1992 Constitution.

"Going back on that decision would be a very serious step backwards in the defence of fundamental human rights and the global trend towards abolition of this brutal form of punishment. The death penalty is a symptom of a culture of violence, not a solution to it," Amnesty International concluded.

Background Information

The security of the Paraguayan public has been threatened by a wave of kidnappings which have become more frequent in recent years.

Cecilia Cubas, the daughter of former Paraguayan President Raúl Cubas, was kidnapped near her

home in Asunción on 21 September 2004.

Her dead body was found on 17 February 2005.

Kidnapping has been part of article 126 of the Penal Code since 1997 with the maximum sentence set at ten years' imprisonment. On 7 September 2003, in response to an increase in the number of kidnappings, it went up to 25 years, the highest possible sentence applicable in the country.

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