

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/274/2008
07 November 2008

Chile: Major human rights reform must mark Bachelet remaining time in office

(Santiago) Concluding a one-week visit to Chile, Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan has today issued an assessment of the human rights situation in the country and submitted a series of recommendations for President Bachelet's last year in office.

"Despite some positive steps taken over the last 18 years, much remains to be done if Chile is to demonstrate commitment on human rights. In the time that she last left in office, President Bachelet has an opportunity to create a long lasting legacy for human rights in Chile," said Irene Khan.

While in Chile, Irene Khan met survivors and relatives of victims of torture, killings and disappearances committed during the Pinochet regime and with Indigenous peoples in Temuco and Calama. During a meeting with President Bachelet, Amnesty International presented her with a memorandum containing a series of recommendations to improve human rights in Chile.

The main challenges presented in the Memorandum are to:

- Provide justice and reparations to the victims and survivors of human rights abuses committed during the Pinochet regime.
- End marginalization and discrimination of Indigenous Peoples.
- Ratify international human rights conventions.
- Develop a comprehensive national human rights plan and establish a human rights institution.

Irene Khan cautioned: "While President Bachelet assured us of her commitment, Congress remains ambivalent and in some cases a major stumbling block in the ratification of treaties and modification of laws to make human rights a reality for all Chileans."

"In a country that has witnessed first hand the tragic consequences of human rights violations, all political leaders and sectors of society share a joint responsibility for upholding human rights."

The organization noted that "major cultural and institutional changes are urgently needed if Chile is to make a clean break from its past."

Justice and impunity

Despite some positive developments, a large legacy of "unfinished business" from the era of military government remains. Laws and institutional culture prevents Chile's ability to fully provide truth, justice and reparations.

“Chile must take concrete and immediate steps if it is to truly put to rest the ghosts of the past, ”

Moreover, impunity persists for more recent human rights violations because of the failure to reform the military code of justice. Amnesty International calls on the government to bring Chile into line with international standards and prosecute all human rights violations in civilian courts.

Amnesty International calls on Chile to nullify the 1978 Amnesty law, to recognize human rights crimes under Chilean law and to allow full reparations to victims of human rights violations, including those living outside of the country.

Indigenous Peoples

Describing her visit to Temuco and Calama to meet the Mapuche, Diaguita and Atacameño Indigenous communities, Irene Khan said: “Indigenous peoples are discriminated and marginalized. The Chilean government has a duty to ensure they are not left behind in Chile’s economic development.”

Amnesty International congratulated the Chilean government for ratifying the International Labour Organization 169 on Indigenous Peoples and called on the authorities to urgently adopt and implement legislation urgently.

Amnesty International calls on prosecution authorities not to apply the anti-terrorism legislation to acts related to the social struggle for land and legitimate complaints of indigenous Peoples.

Creating a long lasting legacy for human rights

Amnesty International calls on the government to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the UN and Inter-American conventions on Enforced Disappearances.

Amnesty International welcomes President Bachelet’s constructive engagement in the UN and on regional issues but warned that if Chile is to retain it’s credibility as a human right’s champion, it has to tackle the discrepancy between its international contribution and domestic implementation of human rights.

For more information and photos of the visit, please see: www.amnistia.cl or www.amnesty.org