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An unrevokable obligation: prosecute the crimes against humanity committed under Chile's military regime

Bringing to justice those responsible for the crimes against humanity committed during Chile's military regime is a duty of all Nations which cannot be relinquished, Amnesty International said today.

Because of their number, scale, gravity and systematic nature, the human rights abuses committed by the military regime in Chile between 1973 and 1990 constitute crimes against humanity, the organization added.

Crimes of this nature are not subject to the statute of limitations. Neither can claims to immunity from prosecution be used as an excuse for not trying those responsible for such crimes.

According to international law on crimes against humanity, as well as under Spanish law, the Spanish courts have jurisdiction over these crimes.

Amnesty International welcomes steps taken by courts in Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and other countries that there be no compromise on crimes against humanity. This is a significant step forward for the protection of human rights.

Furthermore, the fact that the vast majority of those responsible for such crimes remain unpunished is an affront to the conscience of humanity. It would be even more incomprehensible if they were now to escape justice, given that the courts have at last taken the initial steps to make them answerable for their crimes.

Almost 50 years after the international community adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and only months after it took the decision to establish the International Criminal Court, it would be incomprehensible to public opinion worldwide if those responsible for crimes against humanity in Chile were not punished. Should they escape justice, it would be a serious step backward for the protection of human rights throughout the world.

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