

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Bolivia: The 30th anniversary of the military coup: what remains to be done to secure truth and justice**

Tomorrow, 17 July, marks the 30th anniversary of the coup d'état led by General Luís García Meza. Three decades on from the military coup, it is essential to reflect on what progress has been made to end impunity for the serious human rights violations committed under military rule between 1980 and 1982.

Amnesty International remains concerned about the lack of progress in combatting impunity from the past in Bolivia. The organization recognizes that some steps have been taken such as, for example, the exhumation of the remains of some of the “disappeared”. However, similar progress has not been made in identifying and bringing to trial those responsible and action by the government and the Armed Forces has been inadequate and belated.

Amnesty International believes that progress must be made on the following three key issues:

#### *Declassification of the files on disappearance cases that took place under military rule*

Despite the existence of several court orders and resolutions passed by both the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Ministry of Defence, military files that could shed light on the whereabouts of those who “disappeared” have still not been opened. Those who “disappeared” during the period of repression include Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, Juan Carlos Flores Bedregal and Renato Ticona Estrada. There have also been complaints that the constant turnover in prosecutors appointed to the case has led to a lack of continuity and unacceptable delays.

The opening of such files is essential for clarifying the truth about human rights violations that occurred under the military government. For as long as the court orders are not obeyed, the suffering of victims' relatives, whose rights to truth and justice have been denied for thirty years, will be prolonged still further.

In February this year, the Bolivian Government made a public promise to the United Nations, in the context of the universal periodic review, that it would draw up a plan “to identify locations where there may be information on enforced disappearances”. Such a plan has so far not been forthcoming.

The impossibility of gaining access to such files, despite recent declarations by the Armed Forces and government members, distinguishes Bolivia from other countries of the region that have recognized the importance of official records to combatting impunity. Until the prosecutors currently appointed to deal with the case gain access to such documents and they are declassified, the State will be in debt to the victims of abuses.

#### *The granting of reparations to victims*

It is of great concern that six years after the passing of Law 2640 (Law on the compensation of victims of political violence), the task of certifying who should be compensated for violations committed between 1964 and 1982 is still not complete. It has also been reported that only 218 people have been certified as eligible, despite the fact that 6,221 applications have been submitted. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and groups of victims and their relatives have expressed concern about the low success rate of such claims.

Furthermore, problems with regard to funding payment of the compensation promised still remain.

Amnesty International would like to remind the Bolivian Government that providing reparation for human rights violations to victims is a State obligation. It is essential that the claims are promptly settled in accordance with relevant international standards.

*Impunity for cases from the democratic era*

Amnesty International takes this opportunity to remind the Bolivian State that cases of human rights violations under successive democratic governments have also been mounting up. Among them, the case of the tragic violent events of October 2003, known as “Black October”, that left dozens of people dead is the most recent example of cases that must not be consigned to oblivion. Sufficient resources must be made available to enable victims and witnesses to appear at the trial proceedings and for the case to reach an appropriate conclusion in accordance with the right to a fair trial.

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In the view of Amnesty International, on this 17<sup>th</sup> July, the Bolivian Government should express its full commitment to driving forward the fight against impunity by announcing concrete and unequivocal steps towards securing the right to the truth for victims of human rights violations. The organization will also be waiting to see how the reforms undertaken to the justice system will help to strengthen the administration of justice and repair the legacy of human rights violations inherited from the past.

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See also: “*Bolivia: Military documents must be handed over if justice for past disappearance cases is to be achieved*”, Amnesty International, 23 February 2010.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR18/003/2010/en/b0f3e80d-eb2d-415e-bc91-760c704d3640/amr180032010en.html>

**Public document**

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