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Chile: The best reparation is justice

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Even though the report issued by the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture in Chile establishes without doubt that torture was an institutional State practice during the military government, it avoids the search for measures which will provide justice in an unequivocal manner, said today Virginia Shoppee, researcher on Chile, following the publication of the report issued by the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture in Chile.

In his public statement on the day of the report's launch, President Ricardo Lagos emphasized that "(...) the path towards understanding our past has been a long, difficult and complex one. To acknowledge the harsh truth of what happened and the responsibility for these actions has not been easy (...)", adding that "(...) we are closing a chapter through which we had to pass. But we are doing so in order to look towards the future, not to endlessly scrutinize the past, in order to strengthen the unity and coexistence of all Chileans (...)"

"The years of Augusto Pinochet's government left a bloody legacy in Chile. To break with this past involves providing full reparations to the thousands of people in Chile who still live under the shadow of this legacy, this reparation must include justice which until now has been denied" said Mrs Shoppee.

Amnesty International has reiterated its concerns to the Chilean government regarding the full implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which in its article 14 establishes that "Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible".

"Annulling the amnesty law and bringing to justice all those responsible for serious abuses, as well as providing survivors and relatives of victims with full reparations is fundamental in order for the Chilean people to heal their wounds and look towards a future without human rights violations," concluded Mrs Shoppee.

Background Information

The National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture received 35,000 testimonies from victims of torture during the years of Augusto Pinochet's military government (1973-1990). The report,

which was presented by members of the Commission to President Ricardo Lagos on 11 November and made public on 28 November, documents 28,000 accepted testimonies, leaving for future consideration a further 7,000 testimonies and includes 1,132 premises used as imprisonment centres in the country's thirteen regions.

The National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture was set up by President Ricardo Lagos and started its work in November 2003, receiving testimonies until May 2004.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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