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Chile: The armed forces and Carabineros* must disclose the full truth

The moral and legal obligation of the Chilean Armed Forces and carabineros (* uniformed police) to disclose all the information on the victims of human rights violations committed during the military government, is now more pressing than ever before, Amnesty International said today.

"Although it is significant that the armed forces and carabineros acknowledged the tragic deaths of 200 people who had been arrested," the organization said, "after 27 years of unabated denial, the information provided is insufficient and inadequate, and often contradicts well-documented evidence."

Amnesty International believes that the armed forces and carabineros have not gone far enough to ease the burden of their outstanding debt to the victims, their relatives and the country as a whole in terms of achieving truth and justice.

"Justice cannot be achieved on the basis of the sparse information provided," said Amnesty International. "The full truth implies knowing where the victims were detained or abducted, where they were taken to, where they were killed, where their bodies were hidden, who did it and why."

"The Chilean military must face its' responsibility before history and its' fellow countrymen after 27 years of silence covering up the gross human rights violations committed," continued the organization. "This obligation must be met unconditionally."

The three elements of truth, justice and reparation are essential to fulfill the undeniable right of the relatives to a full answer to what happened to their loved ones. The truth needs to be clear and precise. Amnesty International believes that the thorough investigation and clarification of the truth regarding the information provided is the role of the courts of law.

Impunity for crimes committed in Chile during the military government (1973 -1990) continues due to the 1978 Amnesty Law. Amnesty International continues to seek the annulment of this law which flies in the face of Chile's international obligations.

Background

The limited information submitted by the Chilean Armed Forces to President Lagos has been handed over to the President of the Supreme Court for the Chilean courts to initiate investigations. Two special investigating judges (*Ministros en Visita*) have been appointed for this task.

Human rights organizations and relatives of the 3,197 victims of "disappearances" and extrajudicial killings -- documented by government commissions -- have stated their concern at the insufficient information provided.

As a result of the Declaration signed in June last year by members of the Human Rights Discussion Table, (*Mesa de Diálogo*), the Armed Forces disclosed information on 200 cases of victims of human rights violations. The information was submitted on 5 January 2001 to the President of the Republic, Mr. Ricardo Lagos. The list contains 180 names of victims arrested between 1973 and 1976 and 20 unidentified victims. The majority of the victims are listed as thrown into the sea, rivers and lakes in Chile.

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