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Chile: The government must lift the cloak of impunity shrouding the Esmeralda

As the Esmeralda embarked upon its latest voyage, Amnesty International yesterday called for the Chilean government and navy to lift the cloak of impunity shrouding this naval training ship and to respond to calls for justice in relation to the human rights crimes committed during the country's *de facto* government.

The Esmeralda was actively used as a centre of detention and torture during the first weeks of the 1973 military coup that was to lead to the cruel military government of General Augusto Pinochet.

In 2003, the Chilean government decided to cancel the Esmeralda's visit to various European ports following pressure from dozens of American and European human rights organisations.

Amnesty International urges the Chilean authorities to acknowledge the serious human rights violations committed on board the Esmeralda; to conduct independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and other human rights violations committed at navy installations and on vessels during the military government; to bring the perpetrators to justice and to provide full moral and material compensation to the victims and their families.

Amnesty International hopes that the governments of the states in which the Esmeralda intends to dock will publicly state the importance of clarifying the whole truth with regard to the serious human rights violations committed on board and the need for those responsible to be brought to justice.

"It is time for the Esmeralda to be able to cross the world's seas without the international community's eyes being upon it," concluded Amnesty International.

General information

The Esmeralda's itinerary includes the following ports:

23 March: Callao (Peru),
10 April: Acapulco (Mexico),
24 April: San Diego (United States),
14 May: Honolulu (United States),
10 June: Tokyo (Japan),
21 June: Pusan (Korea),
28 June: Shangai (China),
30 June: Noumea (New Caledonia),

20 August: Papeete (France),
9 September: Hanga Roa (Chile)
26 September: Valparaiso (Chile).

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