

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Chile: Important conviction against 75 former agents of Pinochet in a case of enforced disappearance

Amnesty International welcomes the judgment which convicts 75 former agents of the secret police of the military regime of Augusto Pinochet, the DINA, for the crime of aggravated kidnapping of political opponent Jorge Grez Aburto in May 1974.

According to the ruling, issued by the Court of Appeals of Santiago on 7 May, the victim spent several days in the London 38 detention centre without contact with the outside world, while being constantly interrogated under torture. To the present day, his whereabouts remain unknown.

Six former senior members of the DINA, including its leader, General Manuel Contreras, were sentenced to 13 years in prison while 35 former officers were sentenced to ten years imprisonment, all as perpetrators of aggravated kidnapping. Another 34 individuals were sentenced to four years in prison as accomplices of aggravated kidnapping. Amnesty International believes that this is a landmark decision as, for the first time, not only has the DINA leadership been punished, so too have other former agents with different roles who also had responsibility in committing serious human rights violations.

The disappearance of Jorge Grez Aburto is linked to the so-called "Operation Colombo" case, an operation organized by the DINA in 1975 to cover up the enforced disappearance of more than a hundred political opponents of the military regime, while at the same time designing a plan to lead national and international public opinion to believe that the deaths were related to the opponents' internal fighting.

Amnesty International believes that the ruling is an important step in the fight against impunity in Chile for serious violations of human rights committed during the military government of Augusto Pinochet. In the context of this statement, the organization calls on the Chilean authorities to ensure that progress in justice continues to ensure that all those responsible for serious human rights violations during the Pinochet regime are brought to justice and to guarantee that such grave violations never happen again.