



# amnesty international news release

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CHILEAN SECURITY FORCES USE CLANDESTINE GROUPS,

SAYS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ORIGINAL

Chile's security forces have developed a new strategy of terror, using clandestine forces to kidnap, torture and kill, Amnesty International said today (Wednesday 3 September 1986).

In the face of increasing public protest against government policies, the clandestine forces have intensified their operations since 1983 after acting on a smaller scale earlier. They carry out attacks and intimidation with impunity in broad daylight, Amnesty International said.

At the same time, official security forces continue to arrest and torture suspected government opponents. The scale of their abuses too has risen sharply since 1983, with mass arrests ever more common, the worldwide human rights movement said in a new report.

Church workers, human rights activists, shanty-town dwellers and members of opposition groups have been among those targeted in both official and clandestine operations, it said.

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Amnesty International is an independent worldwide movement working impartially for the release of all prisoners of conscience, fair and prompt trials for political prisoners and an end to torture and executions. It is funded by donations from its members and supporters throughout the world. It has formal relations with the United Nations, Unesco, the Council of Europe, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States.

Despite government denials, the report says, there is ample evidence, including some which has emerged in judicial enquiries, to show that the clandestine groups include members of the security forces acting under cover with civilian collaborators.

The 22-page report, The Clandestine and Illegal Practices of the Security Forces in Chile, points to an intensified effort by the government to silence all opposition.

Mass round-ups such as the detention of some 15,000 people in the poor suburbs of the capital, Santiago, in May of this year, have resulted in some of the highest arrest figures since the days following the 1973 coup which brought the present government to power, when hundreds were killed or "disappeared".

Security police powers have been reinforced. Under emergency laws in force since the coup, political parties are banned. Journalists, political and community leaders and trade unionists are harassed and imprisoned for criticizing the government or seeking to organize peaceful protest, the report notes.

At the same time, dozens of people have been attacked, abducted, tortured or shot dead by the clandestine forces. These groups are highly organized and appear to have considerable financial backing, the report says. They use vehicles without registration plates, operate with impunity both in broad daylight and during curfew hours, and have the sort of detailed information about their victims that would normally be held by government intelligence units.

Despite the massive scale of human rights violations, the report says, with few exceptions the courts have been unwilling or unable to prosecute members of the security forces.

Up to the time the Amnesty International report went to press in mid-1986, not one member of the security forces had been convicted of the torture or killing of a political prisoner. Yet the report points out that Amnesty International has information on dozens of cases in which security force personnel are implicated.

The report sets out a series of recommendations which it says should be implemented immediately to protect human rights in Chile. The measures include a review of the functions of the security forces, the closure of interrogation centres run by the security police and immediate access to lawyers for all detainees.

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