

THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY

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PRESS RELEASE

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BRITISH HOME SECRETARY RELEASES PINOCHET CHILEANS WORLDWIDE DENIED JUSTICE

On behalf of our Chilean clients and their families, victims of human rights violations committed under the Pinochet regime, The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) strongly denounces the decision of the British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to end the extradition proceedings and allow the former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet to escape justice and return to Chile. "When Jack Straw set Pinochet free this morning, he denied justice to over three thousand victims of torture and other atrocities committed during Pinochet's dictatorship," said Jill Peasley, CJA's Assistant Director.

The Center for Justice & Accountability (CJA) provides legal representation to over thirty Chileans and their family members who are victims of torture and disappearance under Pinochet's reign. CJA acts as a liaison between its clients and the Spanish prosecutors working on the Pinochet prosecution in an effort to bolster the cases pending against Pinochet in Spain. Chileans and their families who suffered human rights violations committed under the Pinochet regime, no longer have the opportunity to seek justice in a neutral, international forum. The Chilean refugee community in the U.S. and abroad now must rely on the international community to publicly pressure the Chilean

government, however unlikely, to bring Pinochet to justice in its own courts. To date, there are 59 cases pending against Pinochet in the Chilean courts.

“Although this certainly isn’t the outcome we’d hoped for, the developments in England over the past fifteen months have sent the clear message that a former head of state is no longer immune from prosecution for acts of torture and other human rights violations,” said Peasley. “We also need to remember that Pinochet’s release was not predicated on substantive legal grounds but rather a procedural concern which in no way equates to a verdict of ‘not guilty.’”

CJA was established in 1998 with the support of Amnesty International USA and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture to provide redress to victims of human rights violations and to pursue human rights violators found in the United States. CJA is committed to ensuring that the U.S. is a genuine safe haven for survivors of human rights abuses by providing them redress through civil lawsuits brought against their alleged torturers under two federal statutes: the Alien Tort Claims Act and the Torture Victim Protection Act. CJA has filed civil complaints against alleged human rights violators from Chile, Bosnia and El Salvador who are all currently living in the United States. CJA also works with U.S. government officials and agencies to encourage criminal prosecutions of human rights violators and the strengthening and enforcement of international and domestic human rights laws.