



Spain court upholds jurisdiction in 1989 El Salvador massacre case

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[JURIST] The Criminal Chambers of the [Spanish National Court](#) [official website, in Spanish] decided unanimously Monday that Spain has jurisdiction to investigate the November 16, 1989, massacre of the Jesuits at the Central American University and their two employees as a crime against humanity after a reversal of legislation that had prevented Spanish jurisdiction over international crimes. Earlier this year Judge Eloy Velasco—who had previously [indicted 20 Salvadoran military officials](#) [JURIST report] for murder, terrorism and crimes against humanity—rejected the crime against humanity claim. The [Center for Justice & Accountability](#) [advocacy website] and the [Spanish Pro Human Rights Association](#) [advocacy website, in Spanish] filed an appeal, which led to the crimes against humanity claim being preserved and restated. The panel explained that having

jurisdiction over a set of facts that constitute a state terrorism crime, Spanish judges have jurisdiction over all the crimes connected to these facts, including a crime against humanity.

The 1989 Jesuit Massacre occurred during El Salvador's [12-year civil war](#) [PBS backgrounder], when right-wing soldiers murdered six Jesuit priests—five of whom were born in Spain—and their housekeeper and her daughter for allegedly aiding the left-wing Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. The case against the 20 Salvadoran military officials was filed using Spain's [universal jurisdiction](#) [JURIST news archive] law, which holds that some crimes are so grave that they can be tried anywhere. In April 2011 the Obama administration [charged](#) [JURIST report] General Eugenio Vides Casanova, former defense minister of El Salvador, for human rights crimes committed during the civil war while he served as the country's top military officer. In 2006 the [US Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit](#) [official website] upheld a [\\$55 million verdict](#) [JURIST report] against Vides and his co-defendant Jose Guillermo Garcia for allowing torture and other human rights violations during the war.

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