

Lucía Hiriart, widow of Chilean dictator Pinochet, dies at 99

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Relatives of people forcibly disappeared during Chile's 1973-1990 dictatorship demand truth and justice at a November 2019 protest in Santiago [Sandra Cuffe/Al Jazeera]

Santiago de Chile, December 17 (RHC)-- In Chile, the widow of former U.S.-backed dictator Augusto Pinochet has died at the age of 99.

Lucía Hiriart married General Pinochet in 1943 and stood by him as he toppled the democratically elected President Salvador Allende in a bloody 1973 coup supported by the Nixon administration.

During Pinochet's 17-year reign, more than 3,000 Chileans were murdered and disappeared; tens of thousands more were tortured.

Hiriart's death was announced just days before Sunday's presidential election pitting far-right candidate José Antonio Kast against leftist Gabriel Boric, a former student leader.

In Santiago, large crowds gathered to celebrate news of Hiriart's passing. One activist, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "For now, all I can feel is joy, but also anger because she died without paying for her crimes. But there's hope with Gabriel Boric's candidacy for the presidency, for a fair presidency that is full of love and justice. We can return to having a country we can all love, that was taken from us 30 years ago."

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