

Argentinian Activists Slam Reduction in Dictatorship-Era Crime Sentence as 'Abominable'



Buenos Aires, May 5 (RHC)-- Human rights organizations slammed the Mauricio Macri administration for what they call a "concealed pardon" for human rights abusers. Social organizations in Argentina have harshly criticized a court decision to apply a defunct law known as "two for one" to reduce the sentence of a dictatorship-era agent charged with committing crimes against humanity under the country's last military regime.

Law 24.390 was valid from 1994 until 2001 and determined that defendants who served a pre-trial detention of more than two years would see each day spent in jail after the two year mark counted as double. The Argentinian Supreme Court has applied the measure to the case of Luis Muiña, who in 2011 was sentenced to 13 years in prison for being a "co-perpetrator of the crime of illegal deprivation of liberty and torture" in five cases.

The move marks the first time the overturned law has been applied in a case of crimes against humanity, as in the past only common criminals have benefited it from it to reduce their sentences.

The Argentinian court's decision was rejected by human rights organizations like the Mothers and

Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, who have fought for the past 40 years to find the children abducted by the military dictatorship from 1976 until 1983 and demand justice for the 30,000 victims disappeared and killed under the regime.

"This ruling is abominable," said Estela de Carlotto, president of Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo. "What kind of crimes against humanity constitute a genocide of state terrorism when they are equated with any common prisoner? We are in a country of upheavals... it is a scam to social morality."

An estimated 750 military and police officers are being held without a definite conviction in Argentina, who could apply for this sentence reduction or in some cases be eligible for release from prison under the controversial rule.

According to Carlotto, the government of President Mauricio Macri wants to erase the victims of the dictatorship from the citizens' memory to build his own story about the country's past. The human rights defender said: "They are destroying us in this administration, not only in the economy but in the moral and civic consciousness that we have taken in recent times to defend what we have to defend."

Hebe de Bonafini, the leader of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, said that "this is nothing more than a concealed pardon."

According to these organizations and other international bodies, and estimated 30,000 people were killed and disappeared during the bloody U.S.-backed dictatorship, although Macri claims the victims only totaled less than 6,000.

The country's Dirty War saw widespread repression of left-wing students, journalists, labor leaders and democracy advocates and was part of Operation Condor, a Cold War-era campaign through which the U.S. backed right-wing military dictatorships and helped quash socialist movements across South America.

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