

Justice and the snake

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Salvadoran Supreme Court decision supports immunity.

El Salvador's Supreme Court dealt a heavy blow to the hopes of victims of human rights violations during that country's civil war, when it prohibited the prosecution of those responsible for the 1989 Jesuit massacre.

As a result of the high court's decision, those who ordered the execution of priests on the grounds of the José Simeón Cañas campus of the Central American University, UCA, in the Salvadoran capital, will escape justice.

On the night of November 16, 1989, a group of the terrorist Atlacatl Battalion, trained by the United States, entered the campus and killed in cold blood, six clergymen and two women who worked in the house.

In Spain, the National High Court recently sentenced Inocencio Orlando Montaña, El Salvador's former deputy minister of public security, to 133 years and four months in prison for the death of five of the Spanish Jesuits, including theologian Ignacio Ellacuría.

The murders of the other three victims -- a priest and the two women, all Salvadorans -- still remains, and will surely remain forever, in the most absolute impunity, especially after the Supreme Court gave an injunction to a group of generals linked to the crime.

After the verdict was announced, lawyer Leonor Arteaga declared to the digital site Sputnik that it could be added to a series of resolutions that protect the responsible parties of these crimes; it is one more piece in the Salvadoran judicial chessboard that hinders every attempt at achieving justice.

A few days ago, the UCA denounced that the judgement is corrupt and those who signed are guilty of breach of trust, and violate a previous provision of the Constitutional Chamber, which ordered that all crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict be judged.

But this is not the only case in which a cloak of impunity has covered the Salvadoran military. The army has repeatedly refused to hand over the files on the El Mozote massacre where more than one thousand civilians were gunned down, half of them children.

They don't provide access to information about the San Francisco Angulo massacre either, or about the children who disappeared during the war, the military attacks against the University of El Salvador, or the deaths of journalists.

As Bishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, another victim of the military, said: "Justice in El Salvador is like a snake. It only bites those who go barefoot."

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