

The trap behind the right-wing bill

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Most Uruguayans do not want a return to a dark and sad past in the country's history. Photo: www.aa.com.tr

By María Josefina Arce

For weeks now, Uruguayan society has been immersed in an intense debate. Alarms have been set off by the trap that hides a controversial initiative to benefit prisoners over 65 years of age under house arrest.

Presented by the right-wing *Cabildo Abierto*, the bill seeks, in the opinion of many, to favor those serving sentences for crimes committed during the civil-military dictatorship that reigned in Uruguay from 1973 to 1985.

The controversial bill was unveiled during the pandemic, under the pretext of giving differentiated treatment to elderly prisoners, who, according to statistics, represent only one percent of the prison population of some 14,10 thousand people.

The wounds of a country that lived for more than a decade under terror, death, torture and human rights violations have been reopened, and whose victims of that period are counted in more than 31 thousand.

There is also a vivid memory of Uruguay's participation in the sadly known Condor Plan, a collaboration between Latin American dictatorships, together with the United States, in the 70s and 80s of the last century to arrest and execute leftist militants.

According to the so-called Terror Files, found in 1992 in Paraguay, 50,000 people were murdered, 30,000 disappeared and 400,000 were imprisoned. Among the victims were three thousand children.

In view of the maneuvers of the right wing, Mothers and Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared and the Association of Former Political Prisoners of Uruguay, among other organizations, called for a mobilization for next Thursday to reject the release of repressors.

The leftist Frente Amplio (Broad Front) urged to join the demonstration and prevent the nation from repeating the atrocities that occurred during the dictatorship, due to the pact of violence of retired and active military.

The bill has also been questioned by UN Rapporteurs, who stated that it would allow the automatic granting of the benefit of house arrest to persons convicted of crimes against humanity committed during the dictatorship.

In a letter to Chancellor Francisco Bustillo, they pointed out that there are no public health reasons that justify this measure, besides the fact that it does not establish that this benefit will be without effect once the COVID-19 health emergency is over.

The maneuvers of the right wing have brought to the surface a possibility that has always been sought by those nostalgic for the dictatorship, but which the majority of Uruguayans reject, as they do not want a return to a dark and sad past in the history of the country.

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