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"DISAPPEARANCES" OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN CHILE

THE CASES OF NINE DOCTORS  
AND FIVE MEDICAL STUDENTS WHO HAVE "DISAPPEARED" IN CHILE  
SINCE SEPTEMBER 1973

Over 600 well-documented cases have been reported to Amnesty International of individuals reported to have "disappeared" following their arrest by uniformed or plainclothed police, military or security forces in Chile between 1973 and 1977. In many cases, sworn statements have been presented to the courts by witnesses to the arrests and by former detainees who saw the individuals involved in secret detention centres or prison camps which were run by security forces during that period. In spite of this evidence, the Chilean authorities have failed to clarify the whereabouts and fate of the "disappeared" and have refused to provide pertinent information to relatives and international organizations, including United Nations' investigators - the UN Special rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Chile (mandated in 1975) and the UN Expert on the Question and Fate of Missing and Disappeared Persons in Chile (mandated in 1979).

In November 1978, representatives of the Roman Catholic church, acting on behalf of relatives of the victims, submitted a document containing information on these cases to the Supreme Court, requesting the appointment of special judges (ministros de visita) to investigate the "disappearances". The action was taken because of the failure of the ordinary courts of justice to follow up the arrests and "disappearances".

In March the following year, the request was accepted. However, little progress has been made in the investigations in most cases and a large number have been closed. The judges dealing with the cases have in several instances declared themselves to be without jurisdiction after evidence emerged that members of the armed forces were involved in the "disappearances". The cases have then been referred to the military courts which have largely been reluctant to pursue investigations and have simply closed many of the cases provisionally for "lack of evidence".

In his 1979 report, the UN Expert on the Question of the Fate of Missing and Disappeared Persons in Chile set out the reasons which led to Chile's responsibility under international law for the fate of the "disappeared" persons. His report states that:-

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1. It has been shown beyond reasonable doubt that in at least 600 cases persons have been arrested by state authorities and subsequently "disappeared"
2. the legislation under which the arrests were carried out was unlawful under international law...
3. the remedies available to the relatives of "disappeared" persons were in almost all instances ineffective
4. the government has taken no action to carry out investigations or establish responsibilities; on the contrary it has waived responsibility of the guilty persons by decree
5. the government has refused to cooperate with the United Nations and other international organizations to clarify the fate of "disappeared" persons."

The UN Special Rapporteur, in his 1983 report to the General Assembly, reviewed the calls made over several years by the UN to the Government of Chile concerning the "disappeared" and concluded that

"The fate of the 635 persons who have disappeared between 1973 and 1977 has not yet been cleared up by the Government, despite the appeals of the General Assembly (resolution 37/183) and the Commission on Human Rights "to investigate and clarify the fate of persons who have disappeared reportedly for political reasons" and "to inform their families of the results of the investigation and to prosecute and punish those responsible for such disappearances" (resolution 1983/38). The Government, as the authority guaranteeing human rights, also has the responsibility of initiating the appropriate inquiries so as to provide adequate remedies envisaged in article 2, paragraph 3, of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Investigations are grossly inadequate. Furthermore, the 1978 Amnesty Decree-Law transforms judicial investigations into a mere formality since, when they end in the identification of officials as being the perpetrators of the disappearances, none of them are liable to be punished because of the application of the amnesty...."

The amnesty referred to above is decree law 2191 of 1978, which declared an amnesty for certain offences committed during the state of siege between 11 September 1973 and 10 March 1978. In a few cases, the bodies of previously "disappeared" individuals had been found. In November 1978 fifteen bodies were found in a disused lime quarry in Lonquén, about 30 miles south of Santiago, and in October 1979 nineteen bodies were found in a communal grave in Yumbel near Concepción. In both cases, however, the police officers charged with the murders were released unconditionally under decree law 2191.

Some of the investigations into cases closed without being resolved have been reopened on appeal. For example, the Military Appeals Court announced recently that it was reversing the earlier decision of a Military Prosecutor's Office to close investigations into the cases of some 70 individuals mostly thought to have "disappeared" after their arrest by the then secret police, the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA). The Appeals Court ruled that investigations into these cases had not been completed and ordered the Prosecutor's Office to carry out further investigations. However, in the vast majority of cases investigations either remain closed or are slow in proceeding and the families of the "disappeared" remain without news of the fate of their relatives.

Among the hundreds who "disappeared" between 1973 and 1977 were doctors, medical students and other health workers. Details of those cases of "disappearance" of health professionals known to Amnesty International are given below.

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A. PHYSICIANS WHO HAVE "DISAPPEARED" IN CHILE SINCE 11 SEPTEMBER 1983

Dr Jorge KLEIN Pipper

Born 29 December 1945. Detained 11 September 1973.  
Psychiatrist. At the time of his arrest, Dr Klein was working as adviser to the General Secretary's Office of the Popular Party Government.

He was arrested on 11 September 1973 at his work-place, the Presidential Palace (La Moneda), after it had been bombed by planes of the Chilean Air Force. Members of the military had been instructed to arrest and remove from the building a group of people who were still in the palace; this included government advisers, security guards and members of President Allende's personal medical team. A group of doctors who were temporarily released shortly afterwards informed Dr Klein Pipper's family of his arrest. Other witnesses alleged that he was taken to the Tacna Regiment from where he was removed a few days later and taken to an unknown destination. Nothing has been heard of him since.

Dr Enrique PARIS Roa

Born 5 March 1933. Detained 11 September 1973.

Psychiatrist and lecturer in the Philosophy Department of the University of Chile. At the time of his arrest, he was an adviser on higher education to the Presidency. He was a member of the Communist Party.

Dr Paris Roa was arrested in the same circumstances as Dr Klein Pippel. He was taken to Tacna Regiment headquarters in Santiago. However, his detention was never acknowledged by the Government. Nothing has been heard of him since.

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Dr Eduardo GONZALEZ Galeno

Born 5 July 1942. Detained 14 September 1973.

Director of Cuno Hospital, near Temuco. Dr González was arrested with his pregnant wife (who was also a doctor) on 14 September 1973 at Cunco Hospital. The arrests were carried out by uniformed men in front of witnesses. Dr González was taken to the police station in Cunco where he was held for a few hours until an Air Force helicopter transferred him to Temuco. Since then there has been no news of his whereabouts or condition. Dr González' wife was convicted on charges unknown to Amnesty International and sentenced by a war tribunal to 3 years and 61 days imprisonment. Her baby was born in prison.

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Dr Arturo HILLERNS Larrañaga

Born 16 December 1943. Detained 15 September 1973.

Surgeon. Dr Hillerns was arrested at his home at 2.00 am on 15 September 1973. Members of the Carabineros (uniformed police) raided his house without producing a warrant and interrogated everyone in the house at the time about a wanted person. They were about to leave but were stopped by Dr Hillerns because they were taking away some medical books. He was then informed that he was under arrest. He was taken away by seven policemen in a white van escorted by several vans without number plates. Uniformed police are reported to have said that Dr Hillerns was being taken to the 2nd Comisaría (police station) in Temuco. However, when relatives went there the following day they were told that he was not being held by the police; they claimed that he had been arrested by left-wing extremists disguised as police. On 16 September 1973, the Commander's Office of the Temuco Garrison issued a statement, published in local newspapers, stating that Dr Hillerns (sic) Larrañaga had escaped on 15 September at 3.00 am while being taken from his home to the no. 3 Helicopter Group in order to obtain information about extremist groups. A similar notice appeared in a newspaper article on 21 October 1973.

Given the number of police involved in the arrest (about 20), the security precautions in force while transferring Dr Hillerns to a detention centre, and the varying stories given by security forces, Amnesty International finds the reports of his alleged escape implausible. Nothing further has been heard of Dr Hillerns.

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Dr Bautista VAN SCHOWEN Vasey

Born 3 April 1943. Detained 13 December 1973.  
Surgeon. Leader of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR: Movement of the Revolutionary Left).

Dr Van Schowen Vasey was sought by the security forces from the day of the military coup. On 13 December 1973, he and a group of others were arrested by plain clothes members of the security forces in the church of Los Capuchinos in Santiago. The body of one of those arrested was later handed over to his family. Another of the detainees, a priest, was released eight days later and subsequently confirmed Van Schowen's detention.

On 8 August 1974, the Interior Ministry admitted that Dr Van Schowen was in detention, at the disposal of the 1st Military Prosecutor's Office. An article in the pro-Government daily newspaper El Mercurio dated 21 August 1974 stated: "Because of the seriousness of the offences which are sufficiently substantiated in the proceedings against Bautista Van Schowen and which are being dealt with by the 1st Military Prosecutor's Office in Santiago, this extremist was arrested on 13 December 1973, shortly after the military take-over on 11 September last year. At present Bautista Van Schowen is being held in one of the country's prisons."

The Government later denied holding Van Schowen claiming that they had made a mistake and that it was the brother of Van Schowen who was being held. This claim was, however, false as his brother had not been arrested. Later in 1974 and in early 1975, Van Schowen was reportedly seen in serious ill-health in the Navy Hospital in Valparaíso. Since then there has been no news of his whereabouts or condition.

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Dr Carlos LORCA Tobar

Born 19 November 1944. Detained 25 June 1975.  
Psychiatrist. Leader of the Chilean Socialist Party. Served as a deputy for the region of Valdivia during the Government of Salvador Allende.

Dr Lorca was arrested in a Santiago street on 25 June 1975 together with Carolina Wiff Sepúlveda, a social worker. The arrests, which were witnessed by several people, were carried out by plainclothes security men who did not produce an arrest warrant. In spite of the fact that the arrests were witnessed and that Dr Lorca was seen in the Villa Grimaldi detention centre in July 1975, the Government denied that he and Carolina Wiff Sepúlveda had been arrested.

Dr Lorca's case was among the 70 cases recently reopened by the Military Appeals Court.

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Dr Carlos GODOY Laggarrigue

Born 9 February 1937. Detained 4 August 1976.  
Head of the Department of Rural Medicine at the Ministry of Health during the government of President Salvador Allende. Member of the banned Communist Party.

Dr Godoy is believed to have been arrested by agents of the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA) while driving from the San Bernardo Hospital on the outskirts of Santiago to another health clinic. From May 1976 he had been receiving regular anonymous phone calls asking about his daily routines and itinerary. The phone calls ceased after his disappearance. In spite of the fact that he was seen after his arrest in the Villa Grimaldi detention centre and the Cuatro Alamos prison camp in Santiago, the Chilean authorities denied that he was in detention.

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Dr Iván Sergio INSUNZA Bascuñan

Born 9 July 1933. Detained 4 August 1976.  
Surgeon. Between 1971 and 1973 Dr Insunza worked as an official of the Servicio Médico Nacional (National Health Service for Public Employees), but lost his job after the 1973 coup. Member of the banned Communist Party. Because of his political affiliation he was prevented from working in public hospitals and returned to private practice.

Dr Insunza, who was a friend of Dr Godoy, also received anonymous phone calls before he "disappeared", the last one being three days before his arrest when he was told by an anonymous caller that the Military Intelligence Service was looking for him. On 4 August 1976 he went to his surgery as usual. In the evening two men in plain clothes waited outside the surgery. Dr Insunza's secretary later stated that when she left the surgery at 9.15 pm, a middle-aged elegantly-dressed man tried to arrest her, but a second man standing nearby signalled that he should let her pass. Dr Insunza left the surgery at about 9.30 pm to make a home visit to a patient. He left the patient's home at about 11.00 pm at which time, according to the patient's father, two individuals were waiting nearby in a parked car. Dr Insunza set off home but never arrived; he was presumed to have been arrested by the security forces.

In a report to the United Nations in 1976, the Chilean Government alleged that on 5 November 1975, Drs Godoy and Insunza had applied to the Canadian Embassy for permission to travel to Canada. However, the Canadian Government denied that any such application had been made.

Dr Insunza's case was among the 70 recently reopened by the Military Appeals Court.

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Dr Gabriel CASTILLO Cerna

Born 4 December 1932. "Disappeared" 11 October 1976  
Neurologist. Professor at the Catholic University in Santiago until  
May 1976.

Dr Castillo Cerna, who at the time of his "disappearance" was working in  
private practice, told one of his employees that he would return to  
his surgery at 11 pm. He never returned and is believed to have been  
detained by security forces. Nothing has been seen of him since.

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B. MEDICAL STUDENTS WHO HAVE "DISAPPEARED" IN CHILE  
SINCE 11 SEPTEMBER 1973

Pablo ARANDA Schmied

Born 2 May 1953. Detained 17 September 1973.  
3rd year medical student at the University of Chile, Santiago.  
Pablo Aranda was arrested without warrant on 17 September 1973 by members  
of the Chilean Army Yungay Regiment. He was arrested during an armed  
raid on the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Santiago where the University  
of Chile Medical School is situated. At the same time, a group of  
hospital employees were also arrested. Some were released, but four  
of them were shot and their bodies appeared at the Forensic Institute  
about 10 days later. Pablo Aranda and one of the hospital employees,  
Juan Lucio Bagús Valenzuela, remained "disappeared" after their arrest.

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Hernán SARMIENTO Sabater

Born 10 August 1947. Detained 28 July 1974.  
Medical student working as an internee at the José Joachim Aguirre  
Hospital in Santiago. Arrested with a student friend near the hospital  
in Parral, south of Santiago, on 28 July 1974 by two uniformed policemen.  
Both students had travelled to Parral to visit Sarmiento's brother who  
was in prison. They were arrested on the way to get the bus back to  
Rancagua where Sarmiento's parents lived. A witness to the arrest  
who tried to intervene was told by police to take coffee and clothes  
for the detainees to the police barracks. When she did this she was  
told that the two had already been released. Neither were seen again  
however, and they remain "disappeared".

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Jorge ORTIZ Moraga

Born 5 June 1954. Detained 12 December 1974.  
1st-year medical student, Santiago. Arrested in the street by DINA agents on the evening of 12 December 1974. The following day, and also on 23 December 1974, his mother-in-law's house was raided by DINA agents who were looking for Ortiz' wife. His mother's house was also raided a few days later by DINA agents who remained for two days in the hope that Sra Ortiz would come there.

Jorge Ortíz was taken to a torture centre known as Venda Sexi (because of the sexual tortures carried out there) where he was last seen on 24 December 1974. On that day he was taken away to an undisclosed destination. One of his student colleagues who was held with him in Venda Sexi alleged in a sworn statement to the courts that she was made to watch him being tortured, that he was tied to a metal bedframe and given electric shocks. He was also suspended from the ceiling by the wrists and electricity applied to the anus and genitals.

In July 1975 Chilean newspapers reported that Jorge Ortíz' name featured on a list of 59 Chileans who were alleged to have died in confrontations with Argentinian security forces. The list was said to have been published in a newspaper called Diario "O' Dia", but the existence of this newspaper is in doubt. All 59 were individuals who had been arrested and had "disappeared" in Chile. A similar list of 60 names appeared at the same time in an Argentinian publication, Lea, of which only one issue was ever published. All were cases of individuals who had "disappeared" in Chile following their arrest. There has never been any official confirmation of the confrontations having taken place and serious doubts have been cast on the authenticity of the reports.

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Renato Alejandro SEPULVEDA Guajardo

Born 15 July 1953. Detained 12 December 1974.  
Medical student at the University of Chile, Santiago. Renato Sepúlveda was arrested on 12 December 1974 by individuals in plain clothes who said they were members of Military Intelligence. The arrest took place in the Medical School of the University of Chile in front of numerous witnesses. Several others were also arrested. Renato Sepúlveda's wife, María Isabel Joui Petersen also "disappeared" after her arrest on 20 December 1974. According to a sworn statement to the courts a witness stated that she saw Renato Sepúlveda Guajardo in the Macul torture centre in Santiago in December 1974 and that she had given him first aid as he had been suspended from the ceiling for several hours and had a broken rib. He was also seen in Venda Sexi at the same time as Jorge Ortíz.

The Chilean authorities denied his arrest.

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Gilberto Patricio URBINA Chamorro

Born 6 July 1949. Detained 6 January 1975. Arrested on 6 January 1975 by DINA agents and taken to Villa Grimaldi detention centre. Gilberto Urbina's wife was arrested the same day and also taken there. She was made to watch her husband being interrogated on several occasions. She last saw him on 15 January 1975; on this day she was transferred to another prison. According to statements from other former prisoners, Gilberto Urbina was taken away from Villa Grimaldi on 26 January 1975.

In July the same year, Gilberto Urbina was one of the individuals listed in Lea as having died in an alleged confrontation in another country. The Chilean authorities continued to deny that he was in detention and, in spite of evidence of his arrest and detention in Villa Grimaldi, have not clarified his fate.

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C. OTHER ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN CHILE

Other members of the Chilean medical profession have suffered at the hands of the Chilean security forces both in the aftermath of the 11 September 1973 coup and throughout the subsequent decade.

For example, in May 1981, three Santiago doctors - Manuel Almeyda, Patricio Arroyo and Pedro Castillo - were detained for up to two months for political reasons and were subsequently released after the authorities failed to press charges. (See Urgent Action 124/81 AMR 22/30-33/81 and AMR 22/38/81 - 22, 26, 28 May and 3, 12 June 1981.) An account of his detention is given by Dr Almeyda in Chile: Evidence of Torture (AI Publications, May 1983). It is believed that the human rights work of the three doctors was the reason behind their detention.

In May 1983, Amnesty International published testimony by Dr Elizabeth Rendic who was detained by the CNI in November 1982 and held at a CNI centre where she was tortured (See Testimonies of Torture in Chile, AMR 22/48/83, 9 May 1983).

In October 1983, Dr Fanny Pollarolo, a psychiatrist working with the Christian human rights organization, FASIC, was charged with offences against the Armed Forces (specifically, insulting the Armed Forces) following an interview published in the weekly magazine Hoy which referred to descriptions made by others of the behaviour of police and military during recent days of protest. She is currently free on bail.

As well as taking action against specific individuals, the Chilean authorities have also attempted on occasions to prevent the Colegio Médico de Chile from carrying out its planned activities. For example, in July 1983 a closed meeting planned by the Santiago Regional Council of the Colegio Médico to discuss, amongst other matters, the current health system in Chile and the Colegio's role in formulating health policy, was prohibited by Government intervention. The Colegio Médico has been taking an increasingly forthright stand of human rights issues and is currently investigating allegations that some of its members have participated in the torture of political suspects carried out by the CNI (Chilean secret police) at secret detention centres.

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Dr Bautista van SCHOWEN Vasey (In Naval Hospital, Valparaíso after suffering damage to spinal column as a result of torture)



Dr Carlos LORCA Tobar

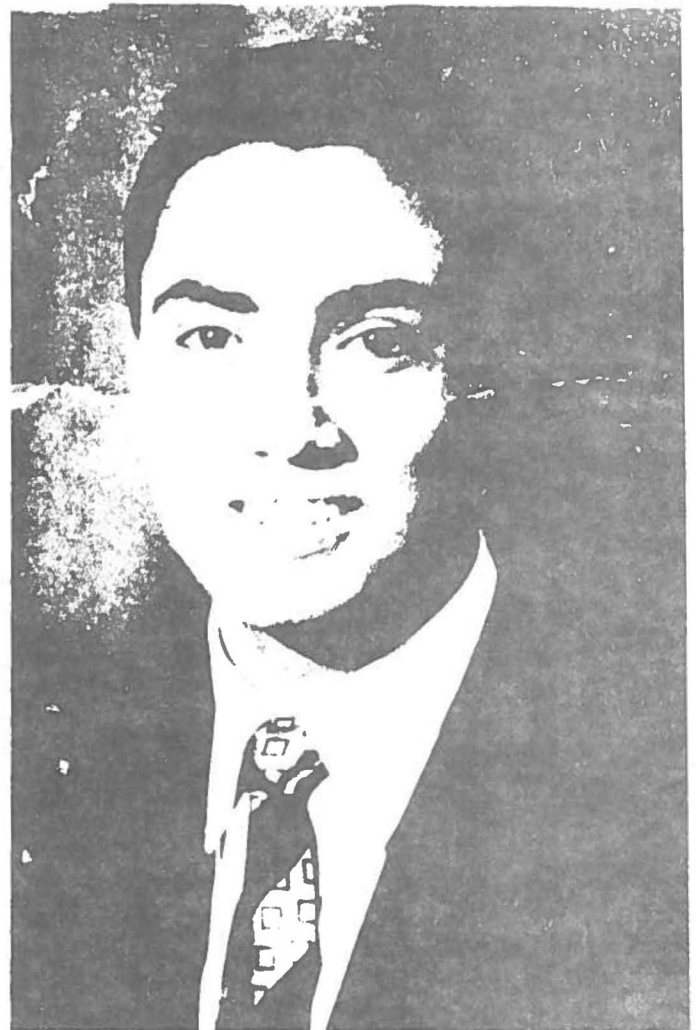


Dr Carlos GODOY Laggarigue





Dr Iván Sergio INSUNZA Bascuñan



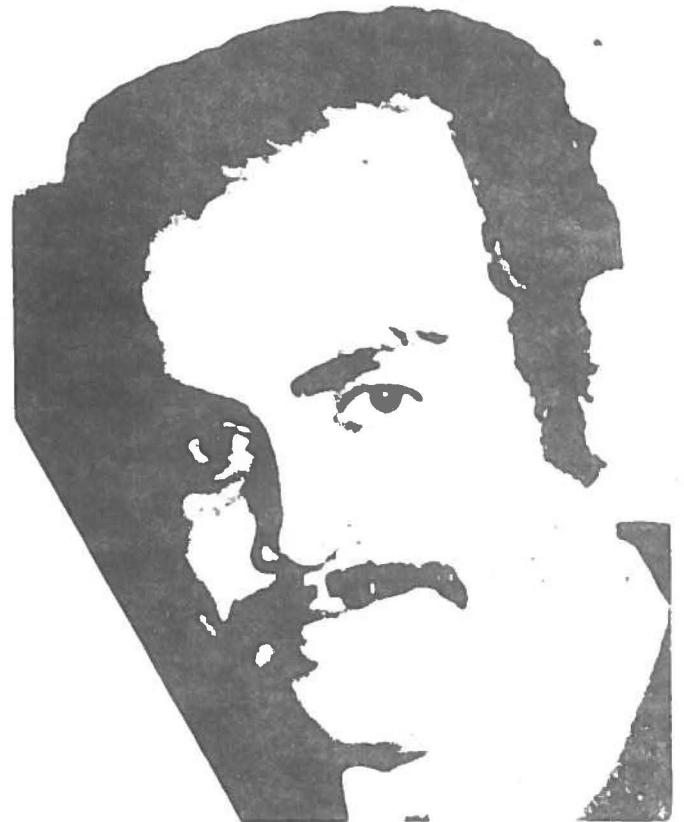
Dr Gabriel CASTILLO Cerna







Jorge ORTIZ Moraga



Gilberto Patricio URBINA Chamorro

