

# amnesty international news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday 18 November 1976

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES THE RELEASE OF 300 POLITICAL PRISONERS  
IN CHILE BUT REGRETS THE CONTINUED IMPRISONMENT OF OTHER POLITICAL  
DETAINEES

Amnesty International today (Thursday 18 November 1976) welcomed the announcement on 16 November by the Chilean government of the release of around 300 political prisoners.

The Chilean authorities assert that the released prisoners represent the total held without trial under the country's state of siege. But Amnesty International's records show that the releases only affect detainees held in the officially recognized camps of Tres Alamos, Cuatro Alamos and Puchuncavi.

The announcement specifically excludes 18 prisoners detained in the recognized camps. A group of prisoners from Puchuncavi camp who were transferred to another place of detention a few weeks before the releases are also excluded. AI has information that other prisoners not covered by the present announcement are held without trial under the state of siege elsewhere in Chile.

An AI spokesman said today that the releases do not include political prisoners on trial or those who have been sentenced. These number more than 1,000, despite the release and exile of many prisoners over the past few months. AI continues to be concerned about the circumstances of their arrest, trial and detention, the spokesman said.

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Amnesty International is a worldwide human rights movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and capital punishment in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of all governments, political factions, ideologies, economic interests and religious creeds. It is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. Amnesty International has consultative relations with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States and the Organization of African Unity.

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A subject of particular urgency for AI is the fate of 1,500 persons arrested by the Chilean security forces since September 1973 who have "disappeared". The authorities refuse to acknowledge the detention of these persons despite numerous eye-witness accounts of the arrests which indicate the authorities' responsibility for these "disappearances". The practice is becoming more prevalent - in January 1976 five per cent of persons arrested were reported as being "disappeared". In August this figure was reported to be 57 per cent by the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, an organization of the Roman Catholic Church in Chile.

AI equally deplores other practices such as relegation of individuals to the interior of the country, expulsion, and house arrest, which restricts liberty for thousands of Chileans.

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