

## International Justice

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### Argentine dirty war generals get life sentence

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**After 32 years, two former generals from the 1976-1983 military dictatorship in Argentina were finally sentenced to life imprisonment on Friday. Former governor and army general Antonio Bussi (82) and former army general Luciano Menendez (81) were convicted of kidnapping, torturing and murdering a senator on the day of the coup in 1976.**

#### House arrest

They may be allowed to serve out their time under house arrest.

Both ex-generals were already under house arrest for prior crimes. They will probably be allowed to remain under house arrest because they are older than 70. The court will rule on that next month.

#### Open wound

Senator Vargas Aignasse was one of the roughly 30,000 people who "disappeared" during Argentina's seven-year dirty war against leftist dissidents. Human rights groups claim that hundreds were kidnapped and killed in the Tucuman province. The legacy of military rule remains an open wound.

The cases against the perpetrators of the dirty war have only resumed a couple of years ago. That is why it took 32 years to bring Bussi and Menendez to trial. Under former president Nestor Kirchner, pardons for military personnel involved in human rights crimes during the dictatorship were scrapped. Several military leaders have been tried and convicted since then.

#### No remorse

Bussi showed no remorse, justifying the actions of the military junta leaders before the sentence was read out. "I am being politically persecuted by those defeated yesterday in a just and necessary war," he said, sitting on a wheelchair with plastic oxygen tubes attached to his nose. "It was a war against Marxist insurgents." Prosecutor Alfredo Terraf reacted by saying that "nobody can free their homeland by killing their fellow countrymen."

#### Leading figures

Bussi was the governor of Tucuman. He was first appointed to the office under the dictatorship. After democracy had been restored, he was elected to the same office again in 1995.

Menendez operated on a higher level, as Bussi's boss. He was in charge of several provinces in the country. In another verdict last month, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in the torture and killing of four leftists 31 years ago.

#### Protests

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the courtroom to hear the verdict. Some reacted furiously when they heard the generals will probably be allowed to serve their sentence at home or in a military facility instead of a prison.

Tags: 1976, Argentina, dirty war

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