Center for Justice and Accountability

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/camps-v-bravo/

Campaign and Advocacy

In August 1972, at an isolated naval base in Trelew, Argentina, military officers shook nineteen political prisoners out of their sleep in the middle of the night, lined them up against a wall and opened fire with lethal weapons. Sixteen died and three survived. This event came to be known as the Trelew Massacre.

Despite public outcry, the victims families were prevented from obtaining information and justice by the existing and successive authoritarian regimes. It was not until 2012, three decades after Argentinas return to democracy, that most of the officers responsible for the massacre were prosecuted and found guilty in Argentine courts. One Roberto Guillermo Bravo moved to the United States in 1973, where he evaded justice until CJAs clients brought suit against him. In July 2022, a Florida jury found him liable for extrajudicial killing, attempted extrajudicial killing, and torture in the Trelew Massacre.

In 1971, the Argentine military installed General Alejandro Agustn Lanusse as President of Argentina. By then, the Argentinean government was rolling out a scheme of repression that included tactics to deny core civil and political rights to those deemed to be subversives, intimidating and persecuting lawyers and families defending political prisoners, and widespread kidnapping and torture.

In May 1972, the Argentine government began relocating political prisoners to holding facilities far from their lawyers, families, and communities to further isolate them. In the events leading up to the Massacre, dozens of prisoners were moved from Buenos Aires and other urban centers in the north of the country to the southern province of Chubut, in the Patagonia region. Separated from families and lawyers by over a thousand miles, a group of political prisoners attempted an ill-fated prison escape. Of the twenty-five individuals who fled the detention center, nineteen were recaptured at the nearby airport. This group of young men and women were transported to Almirante Zar Naval Base, where they were interrogated, degraded, and tortured.

A week later, in the early hours of August 22, 1972, four Argentine naval officers, including Ensign Roberto Guillermo Bravo, allegedly woke the prisoners, ordered them to exit their cells, and lined them up against a wall in the hallway. The officers then opened fire on the group with lethal weapons, shooting indiscriminately.

The official military story was that this was a failed escape attempt. But the three severely injured survivors, Mara Antonia Berger, Ren Haidar, and Alberto Camps, told a different story and let the country know that what had taken place in Trelew was a massacre.

In the years that followed, the three surviving victims were either murdered or disappeared. Relatives of those killed and their lawyers faced extreme persecution to keep them quiet and prevent them from seeking accountability. Despite the public outcry following the Trelew Massacre, it was decades before any of the participating officers were held accountable.

In 2012, three of the perpetrators of the Trelew Massacre who were in Argentina were convicted. Argentinean courts found the Trelew Massacre had been a crime against humanity, committed in the context of widespread and systematic persecution of General Lanusses dictatorships political opponents. The courts concluded, therefore, that the amnesty and statute of limitations were not applicable to the Trelew Massacre and affirmed the convictions.

On July 1, 2022, a Florida jury found Bravo responsible for the extrajudicial killing of Eduardo Cappello, Rubn Bonet, and Ana Mara Villarreal de Santucho, and for the attempted extrajudicial killing and torture of Alberto Camps. The jury awarded \$24.25 million in damages, including \$12 million in punitive damages, to our clients, represented by CJA, Keker, Van Nest & Peters, and Markus/Moss, PLLC, in collaboration with the

Argentina is still seeking Bravos extradition to face a criminal trial there. Though Bravo successfully contested the request for his extradition in 2010, Argentina submitted a renewed extradition request in 2019 with additional information obtained during the criminal trial of the other officers involved in the Massacre. The renewed request is pending before a federal district court in Florida.

En agosto de 1972, en una aislada base naval ubicada en Trelew, Argentina, oficiales militares abruptamente levantaron a diecinueve presos políticos en medio de la noche, los hicieron pararse en fila contra una pared para despus abrir fuego con armas letales. Diecisis murieron y slo tres sobrevivieron. Este evento se conoci como la Masacre de Trelew.

A pesar del clamor pblico, los familiares de las vctimas se vieron impedidos de obtener informacin y justicia por los regmenes autoritarios existentes y sucesivos. No fue hasta 2012, tres dcadas despus del regreso de Argentina a la democracia, que la mayora de los oficiales responsables de la masacre fueron procesados y declarados culpables en los tribunales argentinos. Uno de ellos -Roberto Guillermo Bravo- se traslad a Estados Unidos en 1973, donde evadi la justicia hasta que los clientes de CJA presentaron una demanda contra l. En julio de 2022, un jurado de Florida lo declar responsable de ejecucin extrajudicial, intento de ejecucin extrajudicial y tortura en la Masacre de Trelew.

En 1971, durante la dictadura cvico-militar de la llamada Revolucin Argentina (1966-1973), la junta militar nombr al General Alejandro

Agustn Lanusse como Presidente. Para entonces, el rgimen militar haba acelerado la implementacin de una maquinaria de represin que inclua el uso generalizado de la tortura, secuestros, toticas para privar de sus derechos civiles y políticos fundamentales a aqullos considerados subversivos, e intimidar y perseguir a los abogados y las abogadas, y a las familias que defendan a los presos políticos.

En mayo de 1972, el rgimen argentino empez a reubicar a personas que estaban presas por razones polticas a prisiones y penales alejados de sus representantes legales, familias y comunidades para aislarles an ms. En los hechos anteriores a la Masacre, decenas de personas detenidas por motivos polticos fueron trasladadas desde Buenos Aires y otros ncleos urbanos del norte del pas hacia la provincia de Chubut, en el sur de Argentina, en la regin de la Patagonia. Al estar a ms de dos mil kilmetros de sus familias y representantes legales, un grupo de presas polticas y presos polticos intent una fuga de la prisin, pero sin xito. De las veinticinco personas que huyeron del centro de detencin, diecinueve fueron capturadas en el aeropuerto cercano de Trelew. Se traslad a ese grupo de hombres y mujeres jvenes a la Base Naval Almirante Zar, donde se enfrentaron a interrogatorios y sufrieron tratos degradantes y torturas.

Una semana despus, en la madrugada del 22 de agosto de 1972, cuatro oficiales navales argentinos, entre ellos el Teniente de Corbeta Roberto Guillermo Bravo, despertaron a las presas y presos, les ordenaron salir de sus celdas y pararse en fila contra una pared en el pasillo. Luego, abrieron fuego en contra del grupo con armas letales, disparando indiscriminadamente.

La versin oficial manejada por el ejrcito fue que los hechos ocurrieron como respuesta ante un intento de fuga fallido. Sin embargo, los tres sobrevivientes, quienes sufrieron graves heridas, Mara Antonia Berger, Ren Haidar y Alberto Camps, contaron una historia diferente e informaron al pas que lo ocurrido en Trelew haba sido una masacre.

En los aos siguientes, las tres vetimas sobrevivientes fueron asesinadas o desaparecidas. Los familiares de las vetimas y sus representantes legales enfrentaron persecucin con la finalidad de mantener el silencio y para evitar que buscaran justicia y rendicin de cuentas. A pesar de las protestas seguidas de la Masacre de Trelew, pasaron deadas antes de que alguno de los oficiales del ejreito rindiera cuentas de sus actos ante los tribunales.

En 2012, varios de los autores materiales de la Masacre de Trelew que se encontraban en Argentina fueron sentenciados. Los tribunales argentinos determinaron que los hechos ocurridos en la Masacre de Trelew eran un crimen de lesa humanidad, cometido en el contexto de una persecucin generalizada y sistemtica a los opositores políticos de la dictadura de Lanusse. Por tanto, los tribunales concluyeron que la amnista y el plazo de prescripcin no eran aplicables a la Masacre de Trelew. En la instancia de apelacin, las cortes confirmaron las condenas.

El 1ro de julio de 2022, un jurado de Florida (EE.UU.) declar a Bravo responsable de la ejecucin extrajudicial de Eduardo Cappello, Rubn Bonet y Ana Mara Villarreal de Santucho, y del intento de ejecucin extrajudicial y tortura de Alberto Camps. El jurado otorg 24,25 millones de dlares en daos y perjuicios, incluidos 12 millones de dlares en daos punitivos, a nuestros clientes, cuyos representantes legales son CJA, y los estudios jurdicos de Keker, Van Nest & Peters y Markus/Moss, PLLC, en colaboracin con el Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS).

Argentina sigue solicitando la extradicin de Bravo para que se enfrente a un juicio penal en ese pas. Aunque Bravo impugn con xito la solicitud de su extradicin en 2010, Argentina present una solicitud de extradicin renovada en 2019 con informacin adicional obtenida durante el juicio penal de los otros oficiales involucrados en la Masacre. La solicitud renovada est pendiente ante un juez federal de distrito en el sur de Florida.



Center for Justice and Accountability 268 Bush St #3432 San Francisco, CA 94104

T: 415 544 0444 F: 415 544 0456



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GERALD GRAY FOUNDED CJA IN 1998 AND CONTINUES WORKING TO HELP TORTURE SURVIVORS TODAY.

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"We will never catch all the torturers—but we will always catch some, and none of them will ever know who is next."