Human Rights Violations in the Pinochet Regime: A Quantitative Presentation of the Rettig and Valech Reports[*]

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Abstract

This article introduces a new dataset on human rights violations during the Pinochet regime in Chile (1973-1990). Based on previous work by Freire et al. (2019a), we code all cases of deaths and disappearances recorded in the Rettig (1991), Valech I (2004), and Valech II (2005) reports. Our dataset includes XX variables and presents information on XXXX individuals, of which XXX appear in at least two reports. We also provide geographical coordinates for all locations of human rights abused mentioned in the three reports. The data are available in several formats, including an R package built especifically for our purposes. The paper shows the temporal and spatial variation of human rights violations during the regime, and proposes further avenues of research for those interested in Chilean history and cross-national studies of state-sponsored violence.

Keywords: Chile; human rights violations; Pinochet; state-sponsored violence; truth commission

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1 Introduction

General Augusto Pinochet ruled Chile with an iron fist from 1973 to 1990. Later findings show that the Chilean Armed Forces and the government's secret police carried out gross human rights violations against political dissidents, including murders, beatings, waterboarding, and kidnappings (Ensalaco 2000; Huneeus and Sagaris 2007; Verdugo 2001). Most of the repression occurred in the first months of the military regime, but state terrorism continued until the last years of the dictatorship, often in collaboration with other Latin American countries (Dinges 2005; McSherry 2012). While the true extension of the brutality of the Pinochet regime remains unknown, estimates suggests that the number of victims may be close to 30,000 (Weissbrodt and Fraser 1992).

In this paper, we provide a quantitative presentation of all cases of deaths and disappearances recorded in the Rettig and Valech reports. Both reports were elaborated at the request of the Chilean government and are the official sources of information on serious human rights abuses during the Pinochet years. The National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation Report, also known as the Rettig Report after its main editor Raúl Rettig, was compiled in 1991 and recorded more than 2,000 cases of murder and kidnappings from 1973 to 1990 (National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation 2004). In 2004, a commission chaired by Bishop Sergio Valech produced another compilation of victims of the military dictatorship, which complemented and expanded the original findings (National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture 2004). The Valech report was updated in 2010 to include more cases.

Our dataset contains 15 variables and 3,215 observations. The data describes personal characteristics of the victims – such as unique id, name, age, gender, and occupation – as well as information about the crimes, including the type, perpetrator, and geolocation whenever such information was available in the reports. We formatted the dataset following the principles of "tidy data", in which each row correspondents to one case, each variable forms a column, and the data are represented as a table (Wickham 2014). Moreover, we provide three different presentations of the data. The first table includes only the cases mentioned in Rettig Report, the second is the data from the Valech Report, and in the final table we merged all cases together. To make the data easily available to users, we provide a companion R package, named pinochet (Freire et al. 2019b), alongside csv and xlsx files that scholars can download at http://github.com/danilofreire/pinochet.

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