

= Death and state funeral of Raúl Alfonsín =

Raúl Alfonsín was the president of Argentina from 1983 to 1989 . He died on March 31 , 2009 , aged 82 . He had lung cancer and died at his home ; a massive candlelight vigil took place in the vicinity of it . Vice president Julio Cobos , the acting president at the time , arranged three days of national mourning and a state funeral at the Palace of the Argentine National Congress . Alfonsín was seen by 40 @, @ 000 people and the senior politicians of the country ; people from other countries also voiced their respect for him . A military escort took his coffin to the La Recoleta Cemetery , and left him at the pantheon for the veterans of the Revolution of the Park .

= = Health and death = =

Alfonsín had lung cancer for almost a year before his death , which led to pneumonia . His medic Alejandro Sandler explained that his health had worsened at several points , which were followed by brief recoveries . In his last days he was visited by vice president Julio Cobos and monsignor Justo Laguna , who gave him the Anointing of the Sick . He received home care , as Sandler preferred him to stay with his family . The president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was out of the country and phoned several times ; Ricardo Alfonsín called her at 17 : 00 and informed her of his father 's health . He died on March 31 , 2009 , at 20 : 30 ; Sandler announced it at 21 : 03 . Alfonsín was sleeping at the moment , next to his family . Cobos was the first politician to arrive at his home .

= = Funeral = =

When the first news of the death of Alfonsín were released , the vicinity of his house at the Santa Fe avenue was filled by hundreds of people , who started a Candlelight vigil . The multitude included friends , neighbors and political supporters . The politicians Felipe Solá and Ricardo Gil Lavedra attended the meeting as well . The balconies of nearby houses were filled with flowers and banners .

The president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was out of the country at the moment , and although she arranged an early return , she could not return to the country in time for the funeral . As a result , the vice president Julio Cobos arranged the state funeral of Alfonsín , alongside Eduardo Fellner ( president of the Chamber of deputies ) and José Pampuro ( acting president of the Senate ) . His widow , former First Lady of Argentina María Lorenza Barreneche , was unable to attend her husband 's public state funeral due to her own declining health .

As a former Argentine president , his body was displayed at the Blue Hall of the Palace of the Argentine National Congress . He also set three days of national mourning , from March 31 to April 2 . Daniel Scioli , governor of the Buenos Aires Province ( birthplace of Alfonsín ) , also announced a provincial mourning . Almost a thousand people attended , and at some moments they sung the Argentine National Anthem .

The people were allowed to enter to the Congress on April 1 , 10 : 00 . Initially , it was intended to keep the Congress open until 20 : 00 , but the number of people attending it forced to delay it for the morning of April 2 . The event was attended by the former presidents Carlos Menem , Fernando de la Rúa , Eduardo Duhalde and Néstor Kirchner , all the members of the Supreme Court of Argentina , mayor Mauricio Macri , governor Daniel Scioli , the president of Uruguay Tabaré Vázquez and several other politicians . The Congress was visited by almost 40 @, @ 000 people . It was the largest state funeral in Argentina since the death of Juan Perón in 1974 .

There was a ceremony afterwards with speeches from politicians from Alfonsín 's tenure and from the Kirchner administration . The ceremony was aired in cadena nacional . It was followed by a mass given by José María Arancedo , archbishop of Santa Fe . Finally , a procession in the Callao Avenue with a military escort took the corpse to the La Recoleta Cemetery . People threw flowers to the coffin , fly Argentine and radical flags , and sung the national anthem . He was left in the pantheon for the veterans of the Revolution of the Park , until he got a special one for himself .

Twenty @- @ two Argentine bishops at the Holy See held a mass for Alfonsín as well . It was at the

Archbasilica of St. John Lateran , and was attended by the Argentine ambassador Juan Pablo Cafiero , the Italian monsignor Giuseppe Laterza and the Argentine monsignor Guillermo Karcher . The bishops met Pope Benedict XVI the following day .

= = Reactions = =

The living former presidents of Argentina sent their condolences for Alfonsín . Carlos Menem said that his death was a great loss for democracy . He also wrote an editorial for the La Nación newspaper , titled " Un viejo adversario saluda a un amigo " ( Spanish : An old adversary salutes a friend ) , mirroring the famous quotation of the radical leader Ricardo Balbín during the funeral of Perón . Fernando de la Rúa said that " he fought all his life for politics and democracy . He raised up the values of democracy . Respect and affection were always present in him " . Eduardo Duhalde described him as a family friend , and said Argentina lost a great man . Néstor Kirchner praised the trial of the Juntas . He also received condolences of José Sarney , Patricio Aylwin and Julio María Sanguinetti , contemporary presidents of Brazil , Chile and Uruguay . The governments of Brazil , Chile , Colombia , France , Mexico , Paraguay , Peru , Spain , United States and Uruguay also sent messages of condolences .

Ricardo López Murphy , minister of economy of president Fernando de la Rúa , said that Alfonsín was " the man who fought for our democracy and the strengthening of institutions , during a time of conflicts and polarizations that our society was merged into " . Cristian Ritondo , legislator of the Republican Proposal , said that " Alfonsín was the main actor of the return of democracy to Argentina . He was a synonym of work , responsibility and patriotism " . Gerardo Morales said that " when we were young in 1983 and sang ' we are life , we are peace ' , it was more than a slogan , it was a synthesis of our hopes : do not suffer more persecutions , live in democracy , in freedom and peace . We were part of the collective project led by Alfonsín " . Elisa Carrió pointed that she had political disputes with him , but respected him nonetheless . Julio César Strassera , judge of the trial of the juntas , hoped that Alfonsín would be remembered as a great democrat . Daniel Scioli , governor of the Buenos Aires province , praised that he died with a complete peace of mind . Mauricio Macri , mayor of Buenos Aires , considered that he must have died in peace , after fulfilling his goals .