

# Mystery Reports Of Dead Chileans

## Buenos Aires

Two mysterious reports on the slaughter of 119 Chileans outside the country have raised grave fear within Chile that all 1500 persons now listed as missing might in fact be dead.

The two published reports, unsigned and of uncertain origin, have been hailed by the government-controlled Chilean press as proof that missing persons are not imprisoned secretly by the ruling military junta but rather have left the country, as the government maintains.

Attorneys in Buenos Aires and others active in human rights affairs in Chile, however, express fear that the reports are bogus, designed to provide a public explanation for deaths that have already occurred.

The first article appeared July 15 in a 23-page Buenos Aires tabloid called *Lea* (Read). Dated Mexico City, it named 60 "Chilean extremists" it said had been killed "in recent days" during undescribed "disagreements, mutual recriminations and disputes over money" within the exiled Chilean left.

The quarrels and killings, it said, took place in Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico and France.

The other article was attributed in reprints appearing in Chile to a newspaper called *O Dia* (The Day) in Curitiba, Brazil. Also unsigned and undated, it

named another 59 "Chilean Marxist agitators" it said had died or fled from an undated encounter with Argentine armed forces in the northern Argentine province of Salta.

The two articles were widely reprinted and quoted on the front pages of the Chilean press beginning July 18. They caused consternation among the families of the 119 persons, according to reports reaching Buenos Aires, as well as among the families of the rest of the 1500 persons reported missing or arrested and incommunicado since the Chilean military government took power in September, 1973.

No encounter involving Argentine troops in Salta has been reported or even rumored in Argentina. Military sources say they are unfamiliar with any minor incident, let alone one in which 59 persons allegedly died as in the report attributed to *O Dia*.

At least two of those reported dead were also reported dead under other circumstances.

No bodies have been returned to Chile, nor have requests for the bodies been answered.

All 119 had previously been reported arrested or vanished, both in court records and in requests for help from the families received by the Committee of Cooperation for Peace in Chile, a church-affiliated group of lawyers and social workers.

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