

Torture  
in Chile  
Santiago, Chile

"Pedrito, are you cold?" asked a voice in the concrete cell.

"Yes, very cold," replied Pedro Araya Ortiz, who was stretched out naked on a wet metal table where he had been writhing under repeated electric shocks.

"This will warm you up," said the voice and a burning cigarette was ground into Araya's skin.

This account of torture under 20 hours of interrogation at the Cerro Moreno Air Force base in Antofagasta was given to lawyers by Araya, a former Christian Democratic deputy and labor leader from Chile's northern mining region.

Araya's case is one of hundreds of documented examples of torture of political prisoners in the hands of the five military and police agencies in charge of national security investigations.

These dossiers, kept by church groups, such as the Inter-Denominational Committee for Peace and Justice, and by lawyers who have filed criminal complaints and writs of habeas corpus in the courts, make the investigation of human rights in Chile a highly sensitive issue for the governing junta.

On July 4, President Augusto Pinochet refused to allow the United Nations Human Rights Commission to send a team to Chile to study the situation and make a report to the General Assembly.

This decision provoked a sharp protest from the State Department to the Chilean government since the United States had used its influence during a meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of American States in May to avoid a debate at that time on human rights in Chile. U.S. officials said that this was done on the assurance from Chile that the U.N. commission would be allowed to interview people in Chile.

Pinochet later announced that the Chilean government would conduct its own investigation of one of the most serious claims of human rights violations.

This is the charge by family members of 270 persons who have allegedly been arrested, but have subsequently disappeared, with

all official security agencies claiming they know nothing about them.

This issue was sharpened in July when two obscure publications in Argentina and Brazil published names of 119 persons who had allegedly been killed, either as guerrillas fighting against security forces in Argentina or by a "death squad" of the extreme left-wing Chilean Revolutionary Left Movement that executed its victims in Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Mexico and France in a "guerrilla vendetta."

All 119 names coincided with names on the list of 270 missing persons whose families swear in affidavits that they were taken prisoner by Chilean security agents after the overthrow of President Salvador Allende Gossens in September 1973.