



The last leader of Argentina's dictatorship on Tuesday was sentenced to 25 years in prison for his involvement in the kidnapping, torture and murder of 56 people in a clandestine concentration camp.

The official, Reynaldo Bignone, 82, was convicted along with six other former military and police officers for ordering beatings and electrocutions of dissidents of the military regime, which governed from 1976 to 1983

Dozens of relatives holding pictures of the dictatorship's victims cheered after a judge read out the decision in a makeshift courtroom set up in a gymnasium. "Justice was slow in coming, but it has finally arrived," said Estela de Carlotto, head of the human rights group Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

More than 11,000 people died or disappeared during Argentina's "dirty war," a systematic crackdown on leftists and other opponents of the military regime. Human rights groups contend that the number was closer to 30,000.

The ruling was the latest by courts that have found new impetus for bringing former dictatorship officials to justice after Argentina's Supreme Court, at the urging of former President Néstor Kirchner, struck down two amnesty laws in 2005 that shielded former officials from charges of human rights abuses.

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