

# EUROPEAN CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Argentine managers summoned for questioning on complicity in dictatorship-era crimes**

*Berlin, 15 May 2012* As part of investigations into the complicity of the sugar company Ledesma in crimes of the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983), the Federal Court of Jujuy has summoned two businessmen for questioning. In April 2011, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) presented an amicus curiae in several cases concerning Ledesma, about their corporate complicity in human rights violations. In their submission, ECCHR highlighted that the government and the judicial authority of Argentina are obliged to investigate the responsibility of corporate actors in relation to human rights violations committed under the military dictatorship. The summonses and a raid of the company's premises in this case mark the first laudable steps; further investigations must now follow.

In the beginning of May, the Oral Tribunal in the Federal Criminal Court of Jujuy resolved that the first trial in Jujuy for human rights violations committed during the military dictatorship will commence on 12 July. The tribunal also summoned the current Director of Ledesma, Pedro Blaquier, and the former manager of the company, Alberto Lemos, to give evidence on 17 May. The summons refers to the alleged responsibility of both for the unlawful deprivation of liberty of victims of the so-called night of the blackout ("Noche del Apagón"), in July 1976. In this incident, approximately 400 people, the majority trade unionists and employees of Ledesma, were taken in trucks, some bearing logos of the company. 55 people are still missing.

A raid of the company in late April revealed, inter alia, intelligence reports, elaborated for Ledesma, on trade unionists who subsequently disappeared – for example, the former union leader Jorge Osvaldo Weisz, who was detained and disappeared in 1974. This information shows that the raid has yielded significant results that will help to further the definition of the criminal liability of the company in the crimes against humanity under investigation.

During this same raid, a 2005 surveillance report about a memorial march held for the "Noche del Apagón" was also discovered. Wolfgang Kaleck, the General Secretary of ECCHR, said "This surveillance of human rights defenders in what is today a democratic state, is of great concern. Next to our colleagues in Argentina, we are monitoring the situation from Europe and we ask the authorities to investigate the crimes of the past and of the present."

Wolfgang Kaleck noted that "After years of impunity, not only the crimes of the military, but also the complicity of Ledesma and other companies in state crimes must be investigated. The truth of what happened in the 'Noche del Apagón' must come to light."

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