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## Argentina Condemned for Giving Minors Life Sentences

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Last week, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (ICHR) reached a verdict condemning Argentina for giving five minors life sentences, violating their rights as ruled by ICHR. The Argentine state was forced to make amends for its actions years after the youths were incarcerated. The cases occurred up to eleven years ago. Some of the sentences were passed in Mendoza and others in Buenos Aires.

ICHR described the sentences as “a cruel and inhuman treatment” and said they “violated the right of the families to personal integrity”. It ordered the state to make reparations to the youths and their families and claimed to be establishing “Argentina’s international responsibility for the violation of personal rights to integrity and freedom”. The ICHR’s sentence also imposed legal reforms and investigation into the cases.

The names of the five convicts involved in the case are César Alberto Mendoza, Claudio David Núñez, Lucas Matías Mendoza, Saúl Roldán Cajal and Ricardo David Videla Fernández. They were imprisoned before they were 18, the age of majority, for robbery and murder. Now they are thirty and have been in prison for over half their lives.

By the time of the ICHR’s verdict, one of the criminals had been released from prison and one had died in prison, whilst the other three remained incarcerated. Ricardo David Videla Fernández, sentenced in 2002, was found hanged in his cell on 23 June 2005. Lucas Matías Mendoza and Claudio David Núñez experienced torture and insufficient medical attention during their stay in prison, leaving Mendoza practically blind.

The ICHR proposed a deep investigation into Fernandez’s death, along with the violation of the human rights of Lucas Matías Mendoza and Claudio David Núñez, which occurred during their stay in prison. The ICHR ordered the Argentine state to offer “free and immediate” “appropriate medical and psychological or psychiatric treatment to the benefit of the victims” and secure them “educational options or formal training”, in addition to the payment of economic compensations for material and immaterial damage.