



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Watch: Argentina July 2021

Argentina, both as a Spanish colony and as an independent state, has exploited and persecuted indigenous populations. Many Argentines still deny the atrocities known as the “Dirty War.”

Colonial Spain forced indigenous peoples off their lands to make way for Spanish settlers. After independence in 1816, successive governments continued this forced displacement of indigenous peoples. In the 1870s, President Julio Argentino Roca enacted the “[Conquest of the Desert](#)”, a military campaign that subjugated and enslaved Mapuche people living in the Pampas region and committed genocide against them. Some Argentines still view Roca as a “civilizing figure,” and the government continues to [deny the Mapuche access to their land](#) and cultural rights.

In the late 19th century, during the Tierra del Fuego Gold Rush, European settlers, in concert with the Argentine and Chilean governments, [systematically exterminated](#) the Ona, Yaghan, and Haush peoples. The decimation of these indigenous populations is known today as the Selk’nam Genocide.

From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, to curb the spread of communism in South America, the [United States](#) CIA organized [Operation Condor](#) in Argentina and neighbouring countries. The Argentine military Junta (1976-1983) detained, tortured, and murdered left-wing activists and other political opponents during the *Guerra Sucia*, or “[Dirty War](#)”. The Junta’s tactics included “disappearing” (i.e. murdering) an estimated 30,000 citizens, transferring [stolen babies](#) to military families, and using “[Death Flights](#)” to drop dissidents into the sea.

Civilian rule returned to Argentina in 1983. Shortly thereafter, the democratically elected Raúl Alfonsín administration began criminal trials against nine leaders of the Junta. Only five were convicted. A [truth and reconciliation commission](#) published the shocking *Nunca Más* report that detailed over 8,000 disappearances and uncovered more than 300 detention prisons. The Full Stop Law of 1986 stopped the trials. In 1989 - 1990, President Menem pardoned the generals who had been convicted. In 2005 the Supreme Court ruled the Full Stop Law unconstitutional. Only one police officer has been tried and convicted since. His main accuser was later “disappeared.”

Due to continuing [denial of the extent](#) of the Junta’s crimes during the Dirty War and the continuing discrimination against indigenous peoples, Genocide Watch considers Argentina to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination and Stage 10: Denial**.

Genocide Watch Recommends:

- Argentina should resume trials of surviving perpetrators of the Dirty War.
- As recommended in the 1983 [National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons](#), Argentina should pay reparations to families of victims of the Dirty War.
- A memorial museum should be built in Buenos Aires dedicated to victims of the Dirty War.
- The Argentine government should implement the United Nations [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) to protect the land and culture of indigenous Argentine communities.