

Ruling Expected Soon in Chile on Whether to Extradite Peru's Ex-President

The New York Times
September 21, 2007

SANTIAGO, [Chile](#), Sept. 20 — This country's [Supreme Court](#) is expected to announce on Friday its response to [Peru](#)'s request to extradite its former president, [Alberto Fujimori](#), who faces charges of corruption and human rights abuses related to when he governed Peru during the 1990s.

Mr. Fujimori, 69, unexpectedly ended a self-imposed exile in Japan and traveled here in 2005, apparently intending to return to Peru and try for a political comeback. But he was arrested soon after he arrived, and Peru quickly sought extradition. The attempt to extradite him has been closely followed both in Peru, where he remains a highly polarizing political figure, and by international human rights advocates.

Maria McFarland, a senior Americas researcher for [Human Rights Watch](#), said the ruling could set an international precedent for extradition cases tried in domestic courts if Mr. Fujimori is sent back to Peru. "It would be significant to have Chile now building up this very positive record and extraditing this former head of state and having its court stand up for accountability," said Ms. McFarland, pointing to Chile's history of human rights abuses under former dictator Gen. [Augusto Pinochet](#).

Mr. Fujimori faces 10 corruption counts, including accusations that he diverted state funds for the benefit of himself and his relatives. Among other serious charges he faces are two counts of human rights abuses related to the activities of the Colina Group, a secretive squad of military and intelligence officers believed to have carried out more than two dozen extrajudicial killings in the early 1990s.

Mr. Fujimori, who was president of Peru from 1990 to 2000, has denied the charges against him. After faxing his resignation from Tokyo in 2000, he received citizenship from Japan, from which his parents had emigrated to Peru.

Chile's Supreme Court has been reviewing the case since July, when a single supreme court judge ruled against extraditing Mr. Fujimori. Under Chilean law, the case was appealed to the full court.

The court said last week that it had reached a decision, but delayed revealing its ruling until after a national holiday that ended on Wednesday. A spokesman for the court told journalists here on Thursday morning that the ruling would be made public on Friday after justices finish editing the text, which runs to 200 pages, though further delays were not ruled out.

Faced with the possibility that the Chilean court could rule against extraditing Mr. Fujimori, Peru's government has prepared a new charge against him in relation to 42 prisoners who were executed at Miguel Castro Castro prison in 1992. Legal experts say

this case, for which Peru could file an extradition request, could prevent Mr. Fujimori from fleeing Chile if he wins this week's ruling.

The extradition request has heightened tension between Chile and Peru, which have been at odds for decades over maritime boundaries, but both governments say they will respect the court's ruling. Japan's ambassador in Lima, Hitohiro Ishida, also said this week that Japan would abide by the Chilean Supreme Court's ruling.

The decision also holds significance for Chile's judicial institutions, given the court's previous hesitance to grant extradition of Nazi war criminals and the perception that the court lacked independence during and following the dictatorship of General Pinochet, who battled his own extradition request from Spain before his death in 2006.

Mr. Fujimori, who contends that the charges against him in Peru are politically motivated, is awaiting the decision under house arrest at a rented mansion in this city's exclusive Chicureo district. If he wins the ruling, he could be free to leave Chile or request asylum here.

But the authorities in Lima, Peru's capital, are anticipating his return, with Interpol already planning how to transfer Mr. Fujimori from Chile to Peru. And human rights groups and relatives of death-squad victims in Lima have gathered in front of the Chilean Embassy there this week to support extradition, reflecting widespread support in Peru for Mr. Fujimori to be returned to the country.