

Published: 09.24.2005

Mexican court blocks arrest of 8 linked to '68 massacre

REUTERS

MEXICO CITY - Mexican President Vicente Fox's government Friday admitted there was little else it could do to punish former officials for their past repression of leftist dissidents after a court dealt the administration another setback this week.

A judge this week refused to issue arrest orders for former Mexican President Luis Echeverria and seven others in connection with a 1968 student massacre by police and soldiers.

It was the latest setback to Fox's attempts to bring to justice former members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, who committed atrocities against leftists for decades.

"The federal government has done what was in its power to investigate and find the facts, identify those responsible and open the way for the application of justice," Fox's spokesman Ruben Aguilar said.

The judge found insufficient evidence for the genocide and kidnapping charges against the ex-president and former Attorney General Julio Sanchez, and said it was too late to try the other defendants.

Special prosecutor Ignacio Carrillo's office said it would appeal Wednesday's ruling on Echeverria, but that process could take some time.

Echeverria, 83, was interior minister during the 1968 massacre, which occurred days before the Olympic Games opened in Mexico City. Officials said police and soldiers killed about 30 people at the leftist student rally, but witnesses put the death toll as high as 300.

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