



Lemkin Institute Statement on the “Masacre de Napalpí” Truth Trial in Argentina

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention wishes to congratulate and express support for the Indigenous Peoples of the Argentine Republic, especially the Qom and Moqoit ethnic groups, for their struggle to obtain memory, truth and justice for the crimes that occurred on July 19, 1924, known as “Masacre de Napalpí” (Napalpí Massacre). After almost 98 years, on May 19, 2022, the Truth Trial concluded with a conviction of the Argentine State as the main responsible party for the Napalpí Massacre.

The trial, promoted by the Native communities and the Federal Prosecutor's Office of the city of Resistencia, Province of Chaco, and supported by civil parties, was carried out during the months of April and May with hearings in the Province of Chaco as well as in the City of Buenos Aires. During these hearings, survivors of the massacre, members of the communities affected by the crimes, and expert anthropologists, sociologists, forensic anthropologists, historians, archivists and jurists, amongst others, gave testimony.

The seven days of the oral debate made it possible to reconstruct the events of the massacre despite the decades that had passed. Consequently, the Federal Court in Resistencia determined as fact that between 400 and 500 members of the Qom and Moqoit ethnic groups died during what the government called the “Napalpí Indian Reduction” at the hands of about 100 police officers from national territories, gendarmes, and some armed civilians. At sentencing, the Court determined that the crimes constituted crimes against humanity and ordered a series of reparatory measures to be fulfilled by the national and provincial state.

This Truth Trial made it possible to reconstruct the general historical context in which the Napalpí Massacre was carried out and, therefore, allowed us to understand the extent of the genocide perpetrated against the Indigenous Peoples and its consequences in the short, medium and long terms. The evidence showed that, after the massacre, the members of the indigenous communities stopped expressing their identity publicly, thus losing their distinctive cultural qualities, such as their languages. Many of these consequences endure to this day.

The Truth Trial and its decision, which will be translated into the Qom and Moqoit languages, constitute historical milestones in the recognition of the genocide against Indigenous Peoples, both in Argentina and in the world. This is the first formal trial worldwide to be carried out by a State regarding this issue. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention hopes that this is the beginning of a much longer and more comprehensive set of mechanisms in the Americas – North, Central, and South – to respond to the request for memory, truth and justice of the hemisphere’s Indigenous Peoples. We also hope this will offer a framework for similar mechanisms for indigenous groups in the rest of the world. For these reasons, we urge all nations to follow this example and contribute to the process of historical reparation and the recognition of neglected human rights for Indigenous Peoples. Properly addressing past atrocities is the only way to construct inclusive societies and a lasting, positive peace.