

The Black Book of Chilean Justice

In early February 2001, Chilean Court of Appeals Judge Jaime Rodríguez sealed the fate of Alejandra Matus, exiling the journalist from her native land for at least 13 years. Matus is the author of *El libro negro de la justicia chilena* (The Black Book of Chilean Justice), an expose of corruption among Chilean authorities.



R. Frank Lebowitz, Digital Freedom Network

The book was confiscated and banned in Chile less than 24 hours after being published last year. The journalist fled Chile and received political asylum in the U.S., where she currently lives. Matus is accused of having violated Chile's National Security Law, which protects authorities, including Supreme Court judges, from public criticism.

Chilean High Court Judge Servando Jordán claimed that *The Black Book* insulted authorities. A day after the book was released on April 13, 1999, Appeals Court Judge Rafael Huerta ordered the seizure of the entire press run of the book. Her book is still banned in Chile but is freely available on the Internet. ([click here](#))

The National Security Law has been criticised by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (ICHR) as an anachronism and a violation of freedom of expression and human rights. Arrest warrant remains Rodríguez, acting on Judge Jordán's petition, began an investigation against Matus, which he finished in December.

On February 5, Rodríguez rendered his final decision, upholding the outstanding arrest warrant against Matus that had been issued in November. Thus, Matus will not be able to go back to her country for 13 years, when the statute of limitation on the charges against her would expire.

Matus was even misled with regard to the judicial process that decided her fate. In December, she was told that the case was closed, while in fact it was the investigation against her that had been terminated. Last week she was given the news that the judge had just closed the case. In Kafkaesque fashion, the Chilean authorities withheld knowledge of the workings of the very judicial system that was sentencing her.

According to Matus, the decision in December had been "the necessary and previous step to the final closure of the case, which he did not decide in December as I was wrongfully informed in the first place." "This is cruel," Matus said in December. "It's been very difficult and sad to accept another Christmas without being able to visit my family.

We don't know how many more we would be apart." It is now clear that the answer will be 13 Christmases, thanks to Chile's judiciary. Link to the full text in Spanish of Alejandra Matus's book *The Black Book of Chilean Justice* : <http://www.dfn.org/voices/chile/bbframeset.htm>
Reporteurs Sans Frontiers have made an appeal to have the State Security Law, which affects Alejandra Matus, abolished. The law has been used to arrest and accuse 17 journalists since 1990. more info: <http://www.rsf.fr>