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Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit, mother of Patricia Julia Roisinblit, a victim of dictatorship-era state terror, joins a march for justice. | Photo: Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit

Three former dictatorship operatives are convicted of kidnapping and torturing two victims and abducting their newborn baby nearly four decades ago.

An Argentine court sentenced three former military and intelligence agents Thursday to a total of 62 years in jail for charges of illegally jailing and torturing victims at a secret detention center in the 1970s during the [country's brutal U.S.-backed "Dirty War"](#) against political dissidents of the dictatorship.

Former Air Force commander and military junta member Omar Graffigna and intelligence chief Luis Trillo both received a maximum sentence of 25 years, and civil spy agent Francisco Gomez was sentenced to 12 years. The three were convicted of kidnapping, falsely imprisoning, and

torturing Patricia Julia Roisinblit and Jose Manuel Perez at the secret military intelligence prison in Greater Buenos Aires known as RIBA and stealing their newborn baby. The court tried the case as crimes against humanity.

Nearly four decades after the couple was kidnapped, they remain “disappeared,” as family members have never been able to learn what ultimately happened to them. Roisinblit was eight months pregnant when she and Perez were detained on Oct. 6, 1978 and gave birth a month later. Her son Guillermo Rodolfo Fernando was abducted and raised by Gomez, one of the accused, and his wife Teodora Jofre under a false identity.

The case is a pivotal one in the decades-long campaign by the iconic [Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo](#)

, who are known worldwide for their efforts to unearth the historical truth behind the dictatorship's systemic brutalization of leftist dissidents. After decades of unanswered questions, the organization managed in 2004 to reunite Guillermo with his grandmother Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit and sister Mariana Eva, who was raised by her grandparents after her parents were vanished when she was just 15 months old.

Guillermo spoke out about the case on Twitter ahead of the sentence. “In his statement, my appropriator (Gomez) said he stole me in order to “do good,” he wrote. “I am 37 years old, and for 21 of those I lived a lie.”

He added that his 97-year-old grandmother is still seeking justice and longing to know what happened to her daughter and son-in-law. Guillermo chillingly posed the question: would the accused use their final statements before the sentence was handed down to finally reveal what happened to Roisinblit and Perez and where their remains could be found?

The family and supporters attended the sentencing hearing in San Martin amid high expectations for an appropriate sentence. The [Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo](#) expressed hope ahead of the hearing that the sentence would finally see justice for the victims and their families and for “all of Argentine society that contributes to this process of memory, truth, and justice.”

In his accusation, prosecutor Martin Niklison argued that the accused did not only use their

positions of power to protect certain interests and impose “their vision of society,” but also did so “in the most savage and brutal way.”

Against Graffigna, who was previously acquitted of all charges in a historic 1985 trial against members of the military juntas, Niklison argued that the former commander’s commitment to the dictatorship and his “responsibility for the plan of systematic kidnapping, torture, and disappearance of thousands of people” were both “beyond doubt” despite so many years of impunity.

The sentence comes after a historic conclusion two weeks ago to the case known in Argentina as La Perla, which sentenced former General Luciano Benjamin Menendez and 27 others to [life in prison for hundreds of cases of torture](#), forced disappearance, murder, and other human rights crimes at two clandestine jails in Cordoba during the dictatorship. Nine others were sentenced to up to 21 years in jail for the crimes.

Argentina's [U.S.-backed Dirty War](#) disappeared an estimated 30,000 victims in its brutal state terrorism campaign against suspected political dissidents, which involved systematic forced disappearances, torture, rape, and assassinations. Argentine human rights groups have dubbed the bloody era a “genocide” against political dissidents.