

## **Carabineros, the most trusted Chilean institution.**

**The Chilean militarized police, Carabineros, is the institution most trusted by Chilean public opinion followed closely by the audiovisual media, while political parties figure in the bottom of the list, according to an opinion poll recently published in Santiago.**

According to the Contemporary Centre of Studies, Cerc, 54% of interviewed Chileans consider Carabineros the most trusted organization, followed by the television 52%, broadcasting stations 50% and the Catholic Church 48%.



Actually the Chilean Catholic Church has dropped considerably from its 60% standing at the beginning of the nineties when Chile was gradually returning to democracy and the rule of the law. Besides lately the Chilean Church has been involved in scandalous court cases after several priests have been condemned for pederasty including one in Punta Arenas who fled to Bolivia and was arrested when he became homesick and returned to Chile.

The Chilean Army also figures high with a 42% trustworthiness from the Chilean population. The Carabineros jumped 13 points from the last poll taken in December.

At the bottom of the list figures political parties with a mere 8% public opinion trust.

Half way in the list are the Senate, Lower House and the Judiciary branch with trust ranking between 18 and 20%.

"This is a most negative feedback for democracy since political parties are the essence of democracy", said Carlos Hunneus, Director of Cerc.

Chilean politics have been involved in several scandals regarding political parties financing an issue that has even reached the presidential office.

Several members of the Chilean Congress were disbarred and judiciary investigations have revealed that the Public Works Ministry was an extremely generous source of resources for funding political campaigns particularly in the 1999 presidential race, a crime that cost the former Minister, Carlos Cruz his job and a prison sentence.

And whom did former Minister Cruz succeed in the Public Works Ministry? none else than the current Chilean president Ricardo Lagos.

"The government considers the case closed because it's a senseless debate, a provocation from the right and it's up to the Courts to decide", said Francisco Vidal Cabinet Secretary and spokesperson for the Lagos administration.