

PUBLIC

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UA 295/06 Fear for safety/death threats

ARGENTINA **Milagros Demiryi (f), human rights defender and former political prisoner**
Argentina Sabaj de Castro (f), aged 77, her mother-in-law
Margarita Alegre de Papetti (f), aged 80, mother of a victim of "disappearance"
Graciela Margarita Zalar (f), sister of a victim of "disappearance"
Carlos Razzeti (m), former "disappeared" detainee

Those named above have been threatened and intimidated by unidentified individuals, apparently in relation to their efforts to seek justice on behalf of those who were killed, "disappeared", or suffered human rights abuses while the country was under military rule between 1976 and 1983.

There have been a number of reports of intimidation and harassment since the apparent "disappearance" of Jorge Julio López, who testified against Miguel Etchecolatz, a former Director of Investigations in the Buenos Aires police (see UA 254/06, AMR 13/004/2006, 25 September 2006). Miguel Etchecolatz was recently sentenced to life imprisonment for kidnappings, torture and murders committed during the military government. Jorge Julio López has not been seen since 17 September.

On 25 September a number of leaflets were delivered in the premises of the non-governmental organization Ecumenical Movement for human rights (*Movimiento Ecumenico por los Derechos Humanos*, MEDH) in the City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe province, where several non-governmental organizations have their offices. The leaflets said: "Terrorist Jorge Julio Lopez, disappeared 30,001. Who will be the [number] 30,002?" (*Terrorista Jorge Julio Lopez, Desaparecido 30,001, Quien sera el 30,002?*). Argentine human rights organisations claim that 30,000 people "disappeared" during the years of military government.

On 28 September an anonymous caller telephoned the National University of Quilmes (Universidad Nacional de Quilmes) in Buenos Aires province, warning that a bomb had been planted there. The threat was later found to be a hoax. It is believed that this threat may be related to former political prisoner and regional coordinator of the MEDH, Milagros Demiryi, who works at the university. She is a witness in the trial against individuals involved in past human rights violations while the country was under military rule.

The day after the bomb threat, Milagros Demiryi's 77-year-old mother-in-law, Argentina Sabaj de Castro, who lives alone in the city of Santa Fe, received a series of anonymous telephone threats which continued over four days. The caller, an unidentified man, told her that she was going to "have an accident" and played funeral music down the telephone. The calls have been reported to the provincial authorities.

On 11 October, in two further separate incidents, Margarita Alegre de Papetti, aged 80, and Graciela Margarita Zalar, received anonymous death threats by telephone at their homes in the city of Concordia, Province of Entre Rios. The women are respectively the mother and sister of people who "disappeared" during the period of military government, and on the day they were threatened, they had had the blood tests which are required to help the authorities identify the remains of victims of "disappearance". They have reported the death threats to the authorities.

On 14 October, threatening messages were painted on the door of the home of Carlos Razzeti, in the city of Rosario, Santa Fe province. Carlos Razzeti was the victim of "disappearance". His father, Constantino Razzeti, a political leader, was killed in October 1973, and Carlos Razzeti is trying to have the judicial case on his death re-opened.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are fears that the current wave of threats and intimidation against those involved in seeking justice for human rights violations committed during the period of military rule could endanger the court cases being brought against those believed to be responsible for these violations. Those who have received threats include people who have played a public role in legal proceedings brought against former members of the Argentine security forces and people who have participated in public events calling for justice. Several trials have been initiated around the country since the 1986 Full Stop Law (*Ley de Punto Final*) and the Due Obedience Law (*Ley de Obediencia Debida*) of 1987, which protected the security forces from prosecution, were declared null and void in June 2005.

Since the return of civilian government in 1983, lawyers, relatives of those who “disappeared” while the country was under military rule and members of non-governmental organizations investigating those “disappearances” have been threatened, harassed and attacked. Thousands of people “disappeared” in Argentina during the years of military government.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the reported wave of threats against victims of past human rights violations and witnesses in the judicial cases against former members of the security forces;
- calling on the authorities to publicly condemn the threats and attacks;
- urging the authorities to exhaustively investigate all complaints submitted to the authorities regarding threats and attacks to victims, relatives and witnesses, and to bring to justice all those found responsible;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that witnesses in forthcoming trials of former security forces personnel will receive effective protection;
- calling on the authorities to continue their efforts to locate Jorge Julio López, who has not been seen since 17 September.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Province of Santa Fe

Sr. Jorge Alberto Obeid

Casa de Gobierno

3 de febrero 2649

3000 Santa Fé, ARGENTINA

Fax: + 54 342 450 6619

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Governor of Province of Entre Rios

Dr Jorge Pedro Busti

Casa de Gobierno

Laprida y Cordoba

3100 Parana

Entre Rios, Argentina

Fax: + 54 343 423 0455

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Minister of Interior

Ministro del Interior

Sr. Aníbal Fernández

Ministerio del Interior

25 de Mayo 101/145.

1002 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 11 4345 3336

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto

Sr Jorge Enrique Taiana

Ministerio de Relaciones
Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto
Esmeralda 1212
1007 Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA
Fax: + 54 11 4819 7324
Salutation: Sr. Ministro /Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Argentina accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 December 2006.