

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 336/94 Death Threats

12 September 1994

Argentina

Elena MENDOZA (f) (Lawyer)

Amnesty International is concerned for the physical safety of Dr Elena Mendoza, a human rights lawyer from Buenos Aires, Argentina, working with the organization *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, "Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo", who has received death threats.

According to information received by Amnesty International, the threats against Dr Mendoza are related to her civil and criminal court work on behalf of the grandmother of a girl "disappeared" during the years of military rule. The girl was later found and reunited with her family. A man called Eduardo Ruffo, reportedly a former member of a "death squad", known as *Alianza Antiterrorista Argentina*, (AAA) Argentina Antiterrorist Alliance, was sentenced to 6 years in prison for the abduction of the girl. He was also ordered to pay compensation to her family.

Reportedly Dr Mendoza started to receive telephone death threats last June. The caller, who identified himself only by the surname "García" (a common surname in Argentina), claimed to belong to "a task force that was no longer operational but that could be reactivated" ("*sostuvo pertenecer a un grupo de tareas en retiro efectivo que se puede volver a activar*"), a thinly-veiled reference to the "death squads" of the years of military government. The caller demanded Dr Mendoza to abandon her client's insistence for compensation. Dr Mendoza has reported the death threats to the judiciary but, to Amnesty International's knowledge has not been granted protection from the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Around 50, of a reported 200 or more children who "disappeared" with their parents or who were born to "disappeared" people in secret detention centres in Argentina during the period of military government (1976-1983), have been traced. Many of these children have been found through the efforts of a group of relatives known as the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo. Since its foundation in 1977, the Grandmothers have been trying to locate the children who were either born in clandestine detention centres or who "disappeared" with their parents after being taken into custody by members of the police or security forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing your concern for the physical safety of Dr Elena Mendoza, following reports of threats against her life;
- requesting that the death threats against Dr Elena Mendoza be thoroughly investigated and those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that all necessary steps be taken to ensure the physical safety of Dr Elena Mendoza.

APPEALS TO:Minister of the Interior

Dr. Carlos Ruckauf
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Casa de Gobierno
Balcarce 50
Buenos Aires CF
Argentina

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telexes: 21194 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Faxes: + 541 331 1156

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

Sub-secretariat for Human Rights

Dra. Alicia Pierini
Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos
Ministerio del Interior
Moreno 711 - 5° Piso
1091 Buenos Aires CF
Argentina

Faxes: + 541 343 2326

Salutation: Estimada Doctora/Dear Dr Pierini

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo
Corrientes 3284 - 4° Piso, Dto.11
1193 Buenos Aires CF
Argentina

and to diplomatic representatives of Brazil accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 October 1994.