

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Argentina: Human rights cases endangered by new wave of threats**

Amnesty International today reported that a new wave of threats and attacks against lawyers, judges and relatives could endanger the court cases being brought against those believed to be responsible for the human rights violations committed under military rule in Argentina (1976-1983).

According to reports received by Amnesty International, the wave of attacks intensified at the end of September after the alleged disappearance of Julio López, a witness in the case involving Miguel Etchecolatz, a former Director of Investigations in the Buenos Aires police, who was recently sentenced to life imprisonment for kidnappings, torture and murders committed during the military government.

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 for offences committed under military rule and people who have participated in public events calling for justice.

On 12 October, Claudia Allegrini – a complainant in the proceedings relating to the disappearance of her partner Lorenzo Ismael Viñas, a victim of “Operation Condor” – received a message at her workplace saying, “Mrs Claudia Allegrini, we are writing to tell you that we have reserved a place for you under Law 24411, so that your family can claim compensation for your disappearance or murder ( . ). Remember that at any moment you could well be one more. We know all your movements. Think about it!”

On 8 October, Maria Cristina Saborido – who was held in the secret detention centre known as “el Pozo de Banfield” [“Banfield Well”] in July 1977 – received an anonymous email message which said, “Filthy lefty, be careful because we’re going to give you electric shocks, even up your arse, and watch out for your siblings because we’ve got it in for them too and that lefty boyfriend of your sister’s, we’ve got him on the list too, wait and see what we do to him”. The next day, her sister’s boyfriend was attacked a few blocks from his home by two men who slashed his arm and called him a ‘filthy lefty’.

Judges and prosecutors in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Tucumán have also been the targets of threats.

“The Argentine authorities have a duty to prevent the threats and attacks from achieving their aim of stopping further people from testifying in cases of human rights violations committed under military rule,” said Virginia Shoppee, the Amnesty International researcher on Argentina.

Amnesty International called on the Argentine authorities to provide the necessary protection to witnesses and members of the judiciary who may be affected as a result of their work for justice. The organization also urged the Argentine Government to carry out thorough investigations into the reported attacks and to

ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

“If the Argentine authorities fail to take specific action and dismantle the structures that are making these attacks possible, it would be tantamount to forsaking the progress that has been made in relation to human rights violations committed during the country’s darkest period,” said Virginia Shoppee.

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