

PUBLIC

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UA 289/02 Fear for safety

23 September 2002

ARGENTINA Estela Carlotto (f) - human rights defender, aged over 70

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Estela Carlotto, the president of the non-governmental human rights organization *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, and President of the *Comisión Provincial por la Memoria*, Provincial Remembrance Commission, for Buenos Aires Province. Estela Carlotto's home was attacked in the early hours of 20 September.

A group of unidentified men reportedly fired a hail of bullets at Estela Carlotto's home in the city of La Plata, Buenos Aires Province, while she was inside. The assailants allegedly used ammunition from a type of rifle known as Itaka, which is sometimes used by the security forces. Although she was not injured, she may be at risk of further attacks.

The attack on Estela Carlotto's home follows the submission on 18 September of a report relating to provincial police practices which violate basic human rights. This includes the practice of torture and "trigger-happy" (*gatillo fácil*) killings. The report was presented to the Buenos Aires Province Supreme Court of Justice (*Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*) by Estela Carlotto as President of the *Comisión Provincial por la Memoria*, as well as several human rights organizations and provincial legislators and justice officials. According to local sources, an investigation has been initiated into the attack, and members of the provincial authorities have expressed their concern at the incident.

Estela Carlotto reportedly stated: "*Hace 25 años que lucho y nunca he tenido un acto tan brutal como este ... hemos recibido agravios durante la dictadura, nunca hechos de esta magnitud, que ocurren en un período constitucional*". ("In 25 years of struggle I have never suffered such a brutal attack ... Although we were harassed during the dictatorship we never had attacks of this magnitude, which are happening during constitutional rule").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Estela Carlotto is the President of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, a non-governmental organization founded in 1977. The organization is active in investigating the whereabouts of their grandchildren who "disappeared", together with their parents, during the period of military government between 1976 and 1983, or who were born during their mothers' captivity in secret detention centres. Estela Carlotto is herself searching for her "disappeared" grandson, who was born during the detention of Estela's daughter, Laura, in a secret detention centre. She is also the President of the *Comisión Provincial por la Memoria*, created in 2000 and made up of non-governmental human rights organizations, church members and representatives of trade unions, the legislature and the judiciary. It is dedicated to gathering and disseminating the recent history of Argentina during the military government and to searching for truth and justice, as well as to denouncing current human rights violations.

Human rights defenders in Argentina are often subjected to harassment and attacks. Amnesty International has repeatedly appealed to the authorities to protect human rights defenders, and to thoroughly investigate complaints of intimidation and attacks against them.

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

- expressing your concern at the attack against Estela Carlotto;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into this attack, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- asking for assurances that the Argentine authorities take all necessary steps to protect Estela Carlotto;
- urging the authorities to publicly condemn all harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, and to publicly recognize the important contribution that human rights defenders make to the protection of human rights and the promotion of a just, democratic and equitable society.

APPEALS TO:

President of Argentina
Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente
Dr Eduardo Duhalde
Presidencia de la Nación
Casa Rosada, Balcarce 50

1064 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telegram: President Duhalde, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 114 344 3800

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente/ Dear President

Governor of Buenos Aires Province

Sr. Gobernador de la Provincia de Buenos Aires

Ing. Felipe Carlos Solá

Casa de Gobierno

Calle 6 entre 51/53

1900 La Plata, Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telegrams: Governor Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 221 429 4189 (If someone answers say "Fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Minister

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto

Dr. Carlos Ruckauf

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Esmeralda 1212

1003 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 11 4819 7359

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Under-Secretary for Human Rights

Sr. Subsecretario de Derechos Humanos

Error! Dr. Oscar Fappiano

Sub-Secretaría de Derechos Humanos

Ministerio de Justicia, Seguridad y Derechos Humanos

Moreno 1228, 2o. Piso

1041 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 11 4381 4571 (it may be difficult to get through to this number. If someone answers say "Fax, por favor")

Comision Provincial por la Memoria

Calle 54 #487

1900 La Plata, Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 221 483 1737 (If someone answers say "Fax, por favor")

Newspaper

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Avenida Belgrano 673

1092 Buenos Aires, Argentina

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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 4 November 2002.