

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 13/03/94  
Distr: UA/SC

UA 123/94 Death in custody / death threats

29 March 1994

**ARGENTINADiego RODRIGUEZ LAGUENS, aged 26, forestry expert (*ingeniero forestal*)**

---

Amnesty International is concerned by allegations that, in late February 1994, police officers in San Pedro, Jujuy province, beat Diego Rodriguez Laguens to death, and that they may now be attempting to cover up the killing by presenting it as the result of road accident, intimidating witnesses and threatening those investigating the alleged crime.

On 20 February, Diego Rodriguez Laguens was reportedly travelling by coach from Salta, where he lived, to Santiago del Estero, when he became involved in an argument with the driver. The latter asked the forester to leave the coach near San Pedro, and reported the incident to local police.

Diego Rodriguez Laguens' family claims that they received information indicating that the police found Diego Rodriguez Laguens in a café and took him to a police garage building where they beat him to death. It is alleged that the police then dumped his body on a nearby highway as if it was the result of an accident. The body was later recovered and kept in the local morgue for six days before being buried as an *NW* (name unknown) in a common grave.

On 9 March, after 20 days searching for Diego Rodriguez Laguens, his family received an anonymous phone call telling them of the alleged killing and secret burial. They went to San Pedro police station where they were told that their relative had been killed in a road accident. However, the family claim that as he had been carrying identification papers, he should have been easily identifiable, and yet they were not informed at the time of any accident and he was still buried as an *NW*. Furthermore, despite a judicial inquiry being mandatory in cases of road accidents, the local judge was not notified until 11 March. A judicial inquiry has now been opened but its results are still unknown.

A forensic examination by an independent pathologist has apparently established that the cause of death was a sudden torsion of the neck which broke the third and fourth cervical vertebrae. The body had nine broken ribs and other wounds consistent with a severe beating.

Witnesses are said to be afraid of testifying in the judicial inquiry. Diego Rodriguez Laguens' mother, Mabel Cristina Laguens de Rodriguez, the family lawyer, Dr Federico Uber, and the independent forensic expert, have all reportedly received death threats.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In recent years there have been frequent reports of human rights violations by provincial police forces in Argentina. Abuses include torture and ill-treatment of detainees, in some cases resulting in death, "disappearance" and possible extrajudicial execution. In January 1994 it is alleged that Juan Carbajal, a migrant worker, was severely beaten in a police station in José León Suarez, Buenos Aires province. In September 1993 Diego Ponce, age 16, reported that he was severely beaten by police in Comodoro Rivadavia, Chubut Province. As a result of the beatings he had emergency surgery which revealed extensive damage to his abdominal organs. Judicial inquiries were opened in

both cases. Abuses by the police have also been reported from Chaco, Corrientes and Mendoza provinces.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Diego Rodriguez Laguens died as a result of severe beating by police in San Pedro, province of Jujuy;
- urging that the circumstances of his death be thoroughly and impartially investigated and that every step is taken to ensure that witnesses are allowed to testify without fear of intimidation;
- expressing concern at the alleged death threats against Sra Mabel Cristina Laguens de Rodriguez, Dr Federico Uber, and the independent forensic pathologist, and urging the authorities to investigate these threats in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

**APPEALS TO**

1) Minister of the Interior

Sr Ministro del Interior

Sr Carlos Ruckauf

Ministerio del Interior

Casa de Gobierno

Balcarce 50, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Telegrams: Ministro Ruckauf, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

**Salutation: Sr Ministro**

2) Governor of the Province of Jujuy

Dr José Carlos Ficooseco

Palacio de Gobierno

San Martín 450

4600 San Salvador de Jujuy

Provincia de Jujuy, Argentina

**Telegrams: Gobernador Ficooseco, San Salvador de Jujuy, Argentina**

**Faxes: +54 882 33 949**

**Salutation : Sr Gobernador**

3) Minister of Government, Province of Jujuy

Teniente Coronel Antonio Paleari

**(Postal Address and fax number as for the Governor)**

**Salutation: Sr Ministro**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS:**

El Tribuno de Jujuy (newspaper, Province of Jujuy)

Belgrano 306

4600 San Salvador de Jujuy

Provincia de Jujuy, Argentina

El Tribuno de Salta (newspaper, Province of Salta)

Ruta 68 kmt 1592

Barrio Parque El Tribuno (Limache)

45400 Salta, Argentina

**Faxes + (5487) 241382**

El Día (newspaper, Province of Buenos Aires)

Diagonal 80, no. 815

1900 La Plata  
Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina  
**Faxes: + (5421) 45550**

Mariano Grondona y Asociados (national journalist)  
**Faxes: + (541) 806 62 62**

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 10 May 1994.