

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

13 February 1997

ARGENTINA Santo BIASATTI, journalist

Santo Biasatti, a well-known radio and TV journalist, has received anonymous death threats against himself and members of his family. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

According to reports, on 7 February 1997 an anonymous caller left a telephone message for Santo Biasatti at Radio Rivadavia in Buenos Aires where he presents a program. The caller indicated that Santo Biasatti would suffer the same fate as Cabezas, ("*Biasatti va a seguir el camino de Cabezas*"). This was a reference to José Luis Cabezas, a press photographer killed in Pinamar, Buenos Aires Province, on 25 January 1997 in circumstances not yet clarified (see below). Later on 7 February, a second anonymous call gave warnings that "the one to suffer the most will be the granddaughter" [Biasatti's], ("*La que mas va a sufrir es la nieta*").

On 8 and 9 February anonymous messages were left on the answering machine of the Buenos Aires' Ombudsman's office alleging that members of the provincial police would be carrying out a contract to abduct Santo Biasatti ("*por encargo de un cliente procederian a realizar el secuestro...*"). The Ombudsman, Dr. Antonio Cartaña, filed a legal complaint on the incident.

Santo Biasatti has reported the death threats to the Buenos Aires Province Governor. Amnesty International understands that an investigation has been initiated. However, reports indicate that at least two judges have disqualified themselves (*se han declarado incompetentes*) from the case. Santo Biasatti has rejected personal police protection, although the judge who is currently in charge of the investigation has ordered protective custody at the radio and TV premises where he works.

While Amnesty International is unable to confirm the source of the threats against Santo Biasatti, the organization believes that there is a well-founded concern for his safety due to the increasing reported number of attacks, threats and intimidation against journalists and the lack of thorough and conclusive investigations into these acts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The charred and handcuffed body of José Luis Cabezas, photographer with the magazine *Noticias*, was found inside a burnt-out car in Pinamar on 25 January 1997. He had also been shot. It has been reported that he had previously received death threats.

In recent years Amnesty International has registered numerous cases of attacks and death threats against journalists, allegedly on account of their investigative journalism or criticism of the government. In several of these cases there were reports of participation or acquiescence by members of the police. Between 1992 and 1993 alone, over 120 cases were recorded (See *Journalism, a dangerous profession: Physical attacks, death threats and harassment of journalists in Argentina*, AI Index: AMR 13/01/94, January 1994). Most of those cases have remained unresolved, including the death of Mario Bonino in November 1993.

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

- expressing concern at the death threats against Santo Biasatti and his family;
- urging that immediate and effective steps be taken to guarantee his safety and that of his family;
- stressing the importance of the investigation that has been initiated and the need for it to be carried out promptly, thoroughly and conclusively, and urging that its findings be made public and those found responsible for the threats be brought to justice;
- expressing concern about the killing of José Luis Cabezas, stressing the same points about the investigation as above.

APPEALS TO:

President

Exmo. Sr. Presidente
de la República Argentina
Dr. Carlos Saúl Menem
Casa Rosada, Balcarce 50
Buenos Aires C.F., ARGENTINA
Fax: + 541 331 6376 / 331 1849
Telegrams: President Menem, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Salutation: Excelencia / Excellency

Minister of Interior

Sr. Ministro del Interior
Sr Carlos Corach
Ministerio del Interior
Casa de Gobierno
Balcarce 50
Buenos Aires C.F., ARGENTINA
Fax: + 541 331 7354 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")
Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Governor of Buenos Aires Province

Señor Gobernador de la
Provincia de Buenos Aires
Sr. Eduardo Duhalde
Casa de Gobierno
Calle 6 Entre 51 y 53
1900 La Plata
Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina
Telegrams: Gobernador de Buenos Aires, La Plata, Argentina
Faxes: +5421 294189
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/ Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Buenos Aires Ombudsman

Defensor del Pueblo de la
Ciudad de Buenos Aires
Dr. Antonio Cartaña
Av. Belgrano 1876, 3o. Piso Of. "B"
Capital Federal
Argentina

Human Rights Secretariat
Subsecretaria de Derechos Humanos
Dra. Alicia Pierini
Ministerio del Interior
Moreno 711 piso 5
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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 3 April 1997.