

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 13/006/2001

Further information on UA 237/00 (AMR 13/11/00, 10 August 2000) - Fear for safety  
14 March 2001

**ARGENTINAVanessa Piedrabuena (note new spelling) - President of the *Asociación Travestis Unidas de Córdoba (ATUC), United Transvestites Association of Cordoba***

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Police officers have forced their way into Vanessa Piedrabuena's house and threatened to kill her, after she took part in a demonstration calling for the investigation into the death in custody of her fellow activist, Vanessa Lorena Ledesma, to be reopened.

On 17 February, at 2.30am, a police car pulled up outside her house in Cordoba. Four uniformed policemen broke down the front door, and warned her "to leave everything as it was," and that they did not want to see her on the streets anymore because "something's going to happen to you that's worse than what happened to Vanessa Ledesma" ("*que dejara todo como estaba ... te va a pasar peor que a Vanessa Ledesma*"). Before they left, one of the police officers put his gun to her head.

Since then she has reportedly been threatened again. She reported all this to the Police Internal Affairs Division (*División de Asuntos Internos de la Policía*), but they are not known to have taken any action to investigate.

Vanessa Piedrabuena (her adopted name; her legal name is Roque Virgilio Piedrabuena) is the President of the *Asociación Travestis Unidas de Córdoba (ATUC), United Transvestites Association of Cordoba*. Her fellow ATUC activist Vanessa Ledesma died in police custody, reportedly after torture, in February 2000. An investigation was opened, and in July a number of police officers were charged in connection with her killing. The investigation was subsequently closed. Vanessa Piedrabuena has been campaigning to have the investigation reopened.

Vanessa Piedrabuena has campaigned for justice ever since Vanessa Ledesma died. She has been threatened repeatedly, but the authorities have consistently failed to investigate, or to take action to protect her. On 16 February, the anniversary of Vanessa Ledesma's death, she had been taking part in a demonstration calling for the investigation to be reopened, in the capital, Buenos Aires.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Argentine authorities still do not adequately investigate reports of torture and extrajudicial execution by the federal and provincial police forces. Those like Vanessa Piedrabuena who report such human rights violations may face reprisals that prevent any criminal complaint from being pursued effectively. (For more information on the death of Vanessa Lorena Ledesma, see Amnesty International's report, *Argentina: Transvestite Dies in Detention*, AMR 13/04/00, April 2000).

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

- expressing concern that police broke into Vanessa Piedrabuena's house on 17 February and threatened to kill her, and asking the authorities to order a prompt, impartial and full investigation;

- asking the authorities to take immediate action to protect her, so she can continue her legitimate work with the *Asociación Travestis Unidas de Córdoba* without fear of harassment;
- asking about the result of the investigation into the death in custody of Vanessa Lorena Ledesma (legal name: Miguel Angel Ledesma), and asking whether any of the officers charged have yet been arrested or suspended from duty.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Córdoba Province

Señor Gobernador de la Provincia de Córdoba  
Dr. José Manuel de la Sota, Casa de Gobierno  
Calle Boulevard Chacabuco 1300,  
5000 Córdoba, Córdoba, ARGENTINA

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/ Dear Governor**

**Faxes: + 54 351 434 30 13**

Minister of Justice and Human Rights

Sr. Ministro de Justicia y Derechos Humanos  
Dr. Ricardo Gil Lavedra, Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos  
Sarmiento 329, 5 piso, 1041 Buenos Aires C.F. ARGENTINA

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

**Faxes: + 54 11 4328 5395**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Ombudsman for Córdoba Province

Defensor del Pueblo de la Provincia de Córdoba  
Dr. José María Zamanillo  
Tucuman 25, 4o. Piso  
5000 Centro Córdoba, Córdoba, Argentina

**Salutation: Sr. Defensor/ Dear Dr Zamanillo**

**Faxes: + 54 351 434 20 60 / 434 20 61**

Human Rights Organization

Unidhos  
Artigas 218  
Córdoba - Córdoba Argentina

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 26 April 2001.