

PUBLIC

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UA 263/03

Fear for Safety/ Death threats

09 September 2003

ARGENTINA **Marcelino ALTAMIRANO (m), human rights defender**

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Marcelino Altamirano, coordinator of the street children's home *La Casita del Puente Afectivo* (The Little House of the Bridge of Affection) in the city of Mendoza. He has been harassed on several occasions and has received threatening telephone calls.

Most recently on 29 August, his car was set fire to, possibly using a Molotov cocktail, whilst parked a few metres from a room containing five sleeping children. A few minutes later an unidentified caller left a message saying "*te hicimos la maldad*", "we did it". A complaint about the incident has been filed with the local police station, *Comisaría 25*.

*La Casita del Puente Afectivo* was created in 2001 to work with street children at high risk, in order to help with their social reintegration. The day before the attack, Marcelo Altamirano had publicly complained on a local radio program about the ill-treatment of children by members of the police and about the corruption of public officials.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Human rights defenders working in Mendoza are often target of harassment and threats. Amnesty International has expressed its concern about their safety and consistently asked for thorough and independent investigations into the judicial and public complaints submitted in this regard. It has also submitted its concerns regarding the ill-treatment reportedly suffered by street children to the Mendoza Provincial authorities. On 29 January 2003, the organization addressed the provincial and national authorities regarding the arbitrary detention of children begging in Mendoza city (See AMR 13/03/2002, 29 January 2003).

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish if fluent, otherwise English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Marcelino Altamirano, following his harassment and intimidation;
- asking for an immediate, thorough and independent investigation into the destruction of his car and the threats against him; for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take the necessary steps to protect and guarantee the safety of Marcelino Altamirano and the children sheltered in *La Casita del Puente Afectivo*.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Mendoza Province

Gobernador de la Provincia

Ing. Roberto Raúl Iglesias

Casa de Gobierno

Barrio Cívico, 4º Piso Cuerpo Central

5500 Mendoza, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina

**Telegram: Gobernador de la Provincia, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina**

**Fax: +54 261 449 2142**

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

Minister of Justice and Security

Ministro de Justicia y Seguridad

Dr. Leopoldo Manuel Orquin

Salta 672 –

5501 Godoy Cruz – Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina

**Telegram:** **Ministro de Justicia y Seguridad, Godoy Cruz, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina**

**Fax:** **+54 261 449 9042**

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

President of the Rights and Guarantees Commission (Chamber of Deputies)

Sr. Presidente de la Comisión de Derechos y Garantías Constitucionales

Sr. Jorge Poblete

Cámara de Diputados de Mendoza

Paseo Sarmiento y P. Mendocinas,

5500 Mendoza, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina

**Telegram:** **Sr. Presidente de la Comisión de Derechos y Garantías Constitucionales, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina**

**Fax:** **+54 261 449 3707**

**Salutation:** **Sr. Presidente / Dear President**

**COPIES TO:**

Mayor of Mendoza

Sr. Intendente Municipal

Dr. Raúl Vicchi

9 de Julio 500 - 2do. piso –

5500 – Mendoza, Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina

**Fax:** **+54 261 438 1387**

Provincial Newspaper

*Diario Los Andes*

Avenida San Martín 1049,

5500 Mendoza, Argentina

**Fax:** **+54 261 420 2011**

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 21 October 2003.