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Argentina: those searching for truth and justice must be protected

The safety of those investigating past human rights violations must be guaranteed, Amnesty International said today commenting on death threats received by Federal Judge María Romilda Servini de Cubría and member of her judicial team.

Judge Servini, who is in charge of the investigation into the cases of children who "disappeared" during the military government, publicly denounced on 15 May death threats to herself and a member of her staff, judicial secretary Ricardo Parodi.

In one of the latest incidents Ricardo Parodi's home was broken into and a knife was left stuck into his cupboard as a threatening sign. Judge Servini was subsequently threatened by an anonymous telephone caller which stated "now we are going after you". In a previous incident last year a vehicle tried to run the car she was travelling in off the road.

"The Argentine authorities should firmly condemn such grave acts of intimidation," Amnesty International said.

"It is also imperative that the authorities publicly express their support for the work of those seeking to establish the truth about past human rights violations and to bring perpetrators to justice."

"So many years after the return to civilian rule in Argentina, the investigations now underway on cases of 'disappearance' have finally marked a step forward in the fight against impunity," the organization added.

" Judge Servini, Ricardo Parodi and all those working on behalf of 'disappeared' children and other victims of human rights violations must be protected at all times and allowed to carry out their legal work without any interference."

Background

A number of former navy officers, including former Admiral and president of the first military junta, Emilio Massera, have been arrested during the investigations initiated on the cases of "disappeared" children, which according to the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo are more than 200. The children were either abducted with their parents or born in secret detention centres, during the captivity of their mothers who have remained "disappeared". Information provided in testimonies that have come to light over the years have established that many pregnant women were taken to naval bases including the Navy Mechanics School (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada- ESMA) in Buenos Aires. Some of the children were subsequently adopted by members of the security forces.

The cases of the "disappeared" children were excluded from the Amnesty laws and presidential pardons passed by civilian governments which have prevented the victims of human rights violations and their relatives from seeking legal redress.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London,
UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW