

PUBLIC

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Risk for Safety

5 November 2002

ARGENTINA

Laura Figueroa (f), human rights lawyer  
Fernanda Sanssone (f), archaeology student  
Emilio Ferrer (m), federal court prosecutor

Staff at the *Movimiento Ecueménico por los Derechos Humanos* (MEDH), Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of those involved in investigating human rights abuses committed during the military government in Tucumán Province. Laura Figueroa, a human rights lawyer, and Fernanda Sanssone, an archaeology student working in an area being searched for remains of the "disappeared", have both received threats.

Late in the evening of 28 October, unknown individuals broke into Laura Figueroa's house in San Miguel de Tucumán, Tucumán Province, while she was out. Several items were stolen and the house was ransacked. At the time, her house was being guarded by two policemen following the order of a federal judge. The policemen were 30 metres from the house but were allegedly unaware of the break-in.

According to reports, on the same night, the house of Emilio Ferrer, a federal court prosecutor, and the offices of the *Iglesia Metodista*, Methodist Church were also broken into. The *Iglesia Metodista* houses the *Movimiento Ecueménico por los Derechos Humanos* (MEDH), Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights. Laura Figueroa, Emilio Ferrer and MEDH are all involved in the search for the remains of those who "disappeared" in the area known as "*Pozo de Vargas*", "Vargas' Well", Tucumán Province.

The police presence at Laura Figueroa's house was due to a previous break-in by four armed individuals on 20 October. The individuals threatened her and played part of a telephone conversation that she had had earlier in the day, to demonstrate that her telephone line had been tapped. Laura Figueroa has repeatedly been intimidated over several months, including receiving threatening phone calls and noticing unidentified people watching her home.

Fernanda Sanssone, an archaeology student who is working with the interdisciplinary team of the Tucumán University in the excavations which are part of the investigation into the "*Pozo de Vargas*" case, was also threatened on 30 October in the street when an unidentified man told her "*Tené cuidado, las cosas se están poniendo feas*", ("Be careful, the situation is turning ugly").

Official complaints on all the threats have been filed before the relevant authorities and investigations have reportedly been initiated.

Human rights defenders in Argentina and those working on the promotion and protection of human rights in the country are often subjected to harassment and attacks. Amnesty International has repeatedly appealed to the federal and provincial authorities to guarantee their work and fully protect their physical integrity as well as to thoroughly investigate complaints of intimidation and attacks on them.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing your concern that human rights lawyer Laura Figueroa is being intimidated and harassed, and that her house has been broken into, seemingly because of her legitimate legal work in relation to those who "disappeared" during the period of military government in Argentina;
- expressing your concern that Fernanda Sanssone and Emilio Ferrer have been intimidated in relation to their work in the investigation into the *Pozo de Vargas* case;
- calling for an immediate, independent and thorough investigation into these and all intimidatory acts, including the break-in at the offices of the *Iglesia Metodista*, and for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- asking for assurances that the authorities take all necessary steps to protect Laura Figueroa and effectively guarantee her safety and right to carry out her legitimate work as a lawyer and human rights defender, and also to protect Fernanda Sanssone and all those who are involved in the *Pozo de Vargas* case, effectively guaranteeing their safety and right to carry out their legitimate work;
- urging the provincial and federal authorities to fully cooperate with the investigation into the *Pozo de Vargas* case;
- calling on the federal authorities to adhere to its international obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms adopted on 9 December 1998, the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolution adopted on 7 June 1999.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Tucumán Province  
Señor Gobernador de la Provincia de Tucumán  
Sr. Julio Miranda  
Casa de Gobierno, 25 de mayo 90  
4000 San Miguel de Tucumán, Tucumán  
Argentina  
**Telegram:** Gobernador de Tucumán, Tucumán,  
Argentina  
**Fax:** + 54 381 43 11 138  
**Salutation:** Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

1064 Buenos Aires, Argentina  
**Fax:** + 54 114 344 3800  
**Salutation:** Excmo. Sr. Presidente/ Dear  
President

Tucumán Newspaper  
Diario La Gaceta  
Mendoza 654, San Miguel de Tucumán,  
Prov. de Tucumán, Argentina  
**Fax:** + 54 381 484 2200

Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio  
Internacional y Culto  
Dr. Carlos Ruckauf  
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores  
Esmeralda 1212, 1003 Buenos Aires, Argentina  
**Telegrams:** Foreign Minister, Buenos Aires,  
Argentina  
**Fax:** + 54 11 4819 7359  
**Salutation:** Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

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 17  
December 2002.

**COPIES TO:**

President of Argentina  
Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente  
Dr Eduardo Duhalde  
Presidencia de la Nación  
Casa Rosada, Balcarraz 50,

