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Amnesty International
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A REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES IN ARGENTINA

The following report updates an earlier paper on the same subject dated 26 May 1976 (MS 103/76) and gives a survey of violence directed against the most vulnerable sector in Argentina today - the refugees.

I. Situation before the military coup of 24 March 1976

Until recently, Argentina has been a country traditionally renowned for its hospitality and open-ness in receiving the persecuted and oppressed from many lands. It is a country itself formed by immigrants and refugees. During the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, hundreds of thousands of European refugees were received in Argentina. For generations, Argentina has received the oppressed from neighbouring countries and after 1973 (the date of the military coup in Chile and the military putsch in Uruguay), it became the only country in the southern cone of Latin America to which exiles could go and receive some measure of protection. The population of political exiles relates directly to the erosion of democratic governments in the southern cone of Latin America. In general, that population consists of people with leftwing views, who are in opposition to the rightwing governments of Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil.

Paraguay - many Paraguayans have been forced to leave their country since General Stroessner came to power in 1954.

Brazil - similarly, many Brazilians have settled in Argentina since the coup of 1964, which overthrew the democratically elected government of Joao Goulart. Many Brazilians are now refugees for the third time, having previously sought asylum in Uruguay in the sixties and in Chile under the Allende government.

Bolivia - many Bolivians entered Argentina after the military coup of August 1971 which brought President Banzer to power and overthrew the progressive government of Juan J. Torres.

Uruguay - Thousands of Uruguayans have fled the country since the abolition of all civil institutions in their country in June 1973, which was formerly one of Latin America's oldest democracies. The abolition of Uruguayan democracy led to the creation of one of Latin America's most repressive regimes run by a civilian president and the armed forces.

Chile - since the coup, thousands of Chileans have crossed the border into Argentina as a result of the political and economic repression. Many of these have entered the country illegally.

Approximately 12,000 Bolivians, Brazilians and Uruguayans had sought political asylum in Chile under the Frei and Allende governments. All left Chile after the coup of September 1973 and the great majority were resettled in Argentina while the remainder came to Europe, notably Sweden and France.

Due to the fact that many refugees have entered the country illegally and

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are not registered, it is not possible to give an accurate figure of the number of Latin American exiles currently resident in Argentina. It has been suggested that the figure is about 100,000, although this estimate may be conservative.

After the death of Peron, political exiles were made to feel increasingly unwelcome in Argentina. During the presidency of Isabel Peron, major government decisions were in large part made by her foremost aide and confidante, the then Minister of Social Welfare, Jose Lopez Rega. Rightwing assassination squads (notoriously the AAA - Argentinian Anti-Communist Alliance) began to operate with complete impunity and often one of the major targets for their activities was the community. (It was later alleged that Lopez Rega had himself created the assassination squads. They had apparently been financed and their actions coordinated from the Ministry of Social Welfare.) Just as occurred in Chile after the September coup, the refugee sector of the population became increasingly subject to persecution, torture and assassination because, in the eyes of the security forces, exiles were seen as potential subversive elements. Some of the exiles had been politically active in their countries- others had been persecuted simply because they were relatives of alleged subversives, intellectuals or officials of a former government or sometimes for no apparent reason whatsoever.

During 1974/5, refugees in Argentina faced problems ranging from malnutrition to frequent arrests and disappearances. They were not only constantly harassed by Argentinian rightwing para-military squads, but were also persecuted and tortured in Argentinian police stations by security agents from their own countries. There is evidence to show collaboration between the Argentinian political police and their counterparts in neighbouring countries.

The issue of this collaboration and that of the virtually unchecked activities of para-military groups was brought up in parliament several times, but despite this and the numerous appeals from international organizations, the government never took adequate steps to control the situation. (Violence is committed by both left and rightwing groups. However, authorities have launched an all-out attack on leftwing violent opposition, while making no apparent attempt to bring to justice perpetrations of rightwing violence.) Some particularly violent incidents include: the kidnapping of five Uruguayans whose bullet-riddled bodies were later found in Uruguay (1974)= the assassination in Buenos Aires of Chilean General Carlos Prats and his wife (1974): the repatriation of Chileans Jorge Fuentes (May 1975) and William Beausire (November 1974), both believed to be held as secret prisoners in Chile: the arrest in Argentina and subsequent repatriation, by Paraguayan agents, of Paraguayan exiles Alberto Alegre and Bienvenido Arguello (November 1975): and the disappearance of Brazilian journalist Sidney Marques dos Santos, after arrest by military personnel (February 1976). The UNHCR offices in Buenos Aires have repeatedly stated that in the circumstances they are powerless to provide effective protection to refugees.

In October 1975, the International Commission of Jurists strongly criticized the standard of protection given to refugees in South America and said that "thousands of refugees who had fled to Argentina from Chile, Uruguay and other countries were profoundly demoralized and alarmed by the uncontrolled attacks made on them, in particular by the notorious AAA, the para-police organization."

2. Situation after the March 1976 coup

In spite of the statements made by the new Argentinian authorities that international law would be respected, the violence perpetuated against refugee communities in Argentina has escalated dramatically since the coup.

To be able to understand the implication of the new regulations passed, It is necessary to note that in Argentina there are about 300 asylees, i.e. persons who have formally been granted asylum in Argentina. They have been issued with a special travel document (blue card), according to standard UNHCR practice throughout the world. The law governing asylum (article 63 of decree 4418/65) requires them to notify the authorities of their presence within 72 hours and to report to the police monthly.

There are about 9,000 de facto refugees, i.e. declared eligible for UNHCR protection but who have not been granted asylum.

There are thousands who are neither asylees nor have they registered with the UNHCR offices as refugees. They are afraid to register in case they become targets of persecution and violence.

The Argentinian government is a signatory to the 1951 convention on refugees with a geographical reservation - that protection would only be given to refugees from Europe. Consequently, refugees from other Latin American countries are not protected in Argentina. The UNHCR is 'recognized' only as a body to provide resettlement facilities in other countries.

New regulations regarding exiles

On 26 March, only two days after the coup, the new military authorities issued a decree law providing for the expulsion of foreigners for various reasons such as "activities which affect social peace, national security or public order", and failure to report previous convictions in their country of origin. In a situation where foreigners are implicitly considered "subversive", this could mean that any refugee is liable to summary expulsion.

After the coup, concern at what seemed to be an indication of increased persecution of refugees led to representations made to the authorities seeking guarantees for refugee lives. On 5 April, the Minister of Foreign Relations, Admiral Cesar Guzzetti, publicly gave assurances that refugees would not be repatriated.

On 1 April, Resolution 2504 was issued, ordering asylees to renew their registration with the police within 15 days. The UNHCR was asked to assist refugees to seek political asylum (otherwise they would be repatriated). At UNHCR request, the deadline was postponed until 3 May. However, on 7 April, it was informed that the resolution did not refer to refugees, but only to asylees. Furthermore, the UNHCR was instructed not to register any new cases.

In the days immediately following the coup, several raids were carried out on refugee centers throughout the country:

- In Buenos Aires, one of the raids was on the Hotel Corrientes run by CAREF, a church organization to help refugees. Pastor Armin Iale, the head of CAREF, was detained for 24 hours. Refugees staying in the hotel were beaten

up and released after a few days. Before their release, some of the refugees were forced to sign documents claiming they had committed "traicon a la patria" (treason to the fatherland). They were issued with expulsion orders.

- In a raid on the Hostel Jose C. Paz, also in Buenos Aires, 19 refugees, including two children were detained and tortured. Some were released after six days, others remained in Cordoba - a refugee center run by the United Nations - was raided. This center is situated in the Campo de Mayo area of Cordoba near a military barracks where many of the disappeared persons are reported to be held. Eighteen people from this center were charged with espionage in the military region and served with expulsion orders.

- Similar raids were also carried out in four refugee hostels in Mendoza.

- On 11 June, a group of 24 refugees of Chilean and Uruguayan nationality were kidnapped from two hotels in Buenos Aires. Two Chileans from this group arrived in London in August under the British government's scheme to provide visas for 75 refugees and their families at present under threat in Argentina. At a press conference the two men, Carlos Ayala and Jose Sepulveda, described their abduction which was carried out by 40 heavily armed men claiming to be police. As a result of international pressure, the refugees were released, but not before they had been beaten up and subjected to electric shock treatment. The following is an extract from the testimony they gave:

"We were continuously beaten after they took us from the hotel. We were kept blindfolded all the time and stripped of our clothes. Everyone was screaming in agony."

Both Jose Sepulveda and Carlos Ayala had fled to Argentina after the September 1973 coup in Chile. Jose Sepulveda had been detained by the Argentinian authorities on two occasions prior to the abduction at the refugee hotel. The case histories of both these men are typical of those of thousands of refugees in Buenos Aires urgently needing to leave the country.

3. The situation of Uruguayans in Argentina

Attached is a list of Uruguayans known to have been murdered or to have disappeared since the March 1976 coup. This list may not be complete but it indicates the scale of repression against the Uruguayan community in Argentina. Recent information has established that there are Uruguayan security forces currently operating in the country with the tacit support of the Argentinian authorities. Reliable sources have spoken of the existence of the Plan Mercurio whose objective is to get rid of all Uruguayans of leftwing tendencies living in Argentina. There is a specially selected force of Uruguayan army personnel to direct the campaign, under the direction of a certain Colonel Ramirez, who according to information from refugees, has recently arrived from the United States for this purpose. With his second in command, one Campos Hermida, a member of the Uruguayan police force, he operates from private houses without any set headquarters in Argentina.

no MERCURIO

The particular targets for these semi-clandestine activities are Uruguayan trade unionists in Argentina, who have accounted for a relatively high percentage of the kidnap and murder victims in the last few months.

The following section elaborates particular cases which may be seen as representative of the kind of repression which currently threatens the community of Uruguayan refugees in Argentina:

a) On 7 April 1976, Ary Cabrera, trade unionist and former bank employee, married and with two children, was abducted in Buenos Aires by a group of armed men. Also in April, 29-year old teacher, Telba Juarez who had escaped from a Uruguayan prison and fled to Argentina in 1973, and 25-year old studnet Eduardo Chiazzole were abducted by a group of armed men in Buenos Aires. Telba Juarez' body was found with five bullet wounds in an industrial neighbourhood of Buenos Aires on 19 April.

Three other Uruguayans who attempted to travel from Argentina to Uruguay disappeared from the port of Colonia on 28 March. They are Elida Alvarez, aged 24, mother of an infant, whose husband is imprisoned in Uruguay, Ricardo Gil Iribarne, 27-year old economics teacher, married with an infant and Luis F. Ferreira, a 38-year old carpenter and former trade unionist. Officials denied that the three were ever arrested.

On 22 and 23 April, five tortured and mutilated bodies, one of them a woman's, were washed on to the shore of the river Plate, which divides Uruguay from Argentina. The Uruguayan authorities claimed that they were persons of Asian origin who were probably killed in a quarrel on a fishing boat some 20 days earlier. However, relatives claim that they are the five disappeared exiles - Ary Cabrera, Eduardo Chiazzloa, Elida Alvarez, Ricardo Gil and Luis Ferreira. One of them had apparently been identified, despite the advanced state of decomposition of the bodies (which may account for the official statement that they had Asian features.) The authorities have not given any names to refute the relatives' claim.

b) On 18 May, two former Uruguayan parliamentarians, Senator Zelmar Michelini (known for his frequent denunciation of human rights violations in Uruguay) and Hector Gutierrez Ruiz (former president of Uruguayan chamber of representatives) were abducted. They were taken from their homes in central Buenos Aires where they had been living quite openly, by a large group of armed men who identified themselves as police officers.

On 22 May, their bullet-ridden bodies were found in an abandoned car in a Buenos Aires suburb, together with the tortured bodies of two other Uruguayan exiles, William Whitelaw Blanco and his wife Cristina Barredo. They had been abducted by an armed group during the night of 13 May with their three infant children. Neighbours alerted by the noise of the kidnappers ransacking the house witnessed the abduction. Slogans were written on the walls, indicating that the groups were acting on behalf of the Uruguayan security forces. (At the end of May, the three children were mysteriously delivered to a hospital.)

c) On 6 July, three Uruguayan refugees were among a group of 12 who were abducted in Buenos Aires by a group of about 30 armed men who hooded them, bundled them into a car and took them to what they believe to be a private house in the countryside. They were released on 23 July and have since been given asylum in France.

During their time in captivity, the three torture victims were finger-

printed and photographed. They were also shown lists of names of other Uruguayan refugees who were being sought. Some of these names were marked with a cross. They were told that this meant that these persons were marked for death.

Prior to a news conference in Paris, the torture victims were examined by members of Amnesty International's Danish Doctors' team. The doctors confirmed that the marks and symptoms of the victims were consistent with their allegations of torture.

The woman victim, aged about 22, has marks of electric shocks over her breasts and thighs and a very bad bruise on her spine. She has cigarette burns on her wrists, breasts, arms and legs. She stated that she had buckets of freezing cold water thrown over her (it is now winter in Argentina). She is currently undergoing tests for tuberculosis and bronchitis. She further alleges that she was raped in front of her companions.

One of the male victims, aged about 25, has electric shock marks on his chest, naval and the top of his legs, as well as bruises on his legs and severe cigarette burns (40 burns on one hand). Besides similar marks, the second man, aged about 24, shows symptoms of psychological stress from a former period of two years' solitary confinement in prison in Uruguay before his kidnapping in Argentina.

d) On 13 July, the same day that the above victims were released, 23 more Uruguayan refugees were abducted in Argentina, including 11 women and two children. Among the victims were the daughter of the murdered parliamentarian Zelmar Michelini, and the prominent Uruguayan trade unionist, Leon Duarte. Another well-known Uruguayan trade unionist, Gerardo Gatti, had previously been abducted on 10 June.

[There are unconfirmed reports that some of these victims have recently been sighted in an unidentified torture center in Buenos Aires which is operated jointly by Argentinian and Uruguayan security forces.]

In August, Amnesty International received a letter from one of the Uruguayans kidnapped at this time, whose son had also been kidnapped 10 days earlier. The following is an extract from that letter: "The Uruguayan security forces, with the tacit support of the Argentinian authorities, are those directly responsible for all that has happened to Uruguayan residents in Buenos Aires. At this moment, it would be impossible for their families to negotiate for the life or liberty of these victims, because their disappearance forms part of the so-called Plan Mercurio destined to eliminate all Uruguayans of leftwing tendencies in both countries. This plan relies on the official support of the police authorities in both countries."

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//While the above material cites in detail the repression of Uruguayan refugees in Argentina, it should be clear from the other sections in this paper that other Latin American refugees, notably Chileans, are equally at risk in the present climate of repression.//

4) Response of governments to date to appeal by UNHCR

In a visit in July to the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, the Argentinian Minister of Economy, Sr Martinez de Hoz, made explicit the predicament of refugees in his country. He stated that his government was unable to provide protection for the thousands of refugees in Argentina and that he was anxious that they should be moved elsewhere as soon as possible.

In June, the UNHCR made an appeal to governments to give asylum to refugees in Argentina. They stated that out of a population of 20,000 political refugees from other countries in Latin America, there were 2,000 cases whom they knew to be in immediate danger.

To date, governments have responded to this appeal in the following ways:

COUNTRY	VISA QUOTA
Austria	250
Canada	1000
France	No set quota but are taking individual cases.
Sweden	150 approximately
Switzerland	No set quota but are taking individual cases.
United Kingdom	75

There is an urgent need for this quota to be increased and for governments who have not yet declared a quota to take part in the refugee scheme.

URUGUAYANS KILLED OR ABDUCTED IN ARGENTINA SINCE THE COUP OF 24 MARCH 1976

1. [illegible]ry CABRERA, abducted 7.4.76. and found dead in Uruguay 22/23.4.76.
2. Telba JUAREZ, abducted 17.4.76. and found dead 19.4.76.
3. Eduardo GRIZZOLA, abducted 17.4.76. and found dead in Uruguay 22/23.4.76.
4. William WHITELAW, abducted 13.5.76. and found dead 22.5.76.
5. Rosario BARREDO de SCHROEDER, abducted 13.5.76. and found dead 22.5.76.
6. Hugo GOMENSORO, abducted 13.5.76.
7. Helmar MICHELINI, abducted 13.5.76. and found dead 22.5.76.
8. Hector GUTIERREZ RUIZ, abducted 18.5.76. and found dead 22.5.76.
9. Manuel LIBERONI, abducted 19.5.76.
10. Ytore PIERRI, abducted 27.5.76.
11. Gerardo GATTI, abducted 10.6.76.
12. Maria del PILAR MONTEDONICO, abducted 10.6.76.
13. Leon DUARTE, trade unionist, abducted 13.7.76.
14. Margarita MICHELINI DE ALTUNA, teacher, abducted 13.7.76.
15. Paul ALTUNA, worker in chemical industry, abducted 13.7.76
16. Jose Felix DIAZ VERDAYES, abducted 13.7.76.
17. Enrique RODRIGUEZ LARRETA? journalist, abducted 13.7.76.
18. Raquel Mogueira de RODRIGUEZ LARRETA, abducted 13.7.76.
19. Enrique RODRIGUEZ LARRETA, journalist, abducted 13.7.76.
20. Ines GONDROS DE STRAMCH, abducted 13.7.76.
21. Eduardo DEAN, abducted 13.7.76.
22. Sara MENDEZ LOMPORIO, teacher, abducted 13.7.76
23. Stella Maria MIQUELO, abducted 13.7.76.
24. Simon Antonio RIQUELO, aged 1 month, abducted 13.7.76.
25. Asilu MASEIRO, nurse, abducted 13.7.76.
26. Laura ANZALONE, student, abducted 13.7.7.6
27. Ernesto ANZALONE ALVAREZ, aged 2 years, abducted 13.7.7.6
28. Maria Monica SOLINO PLATERO, abducted 7.7.76.
29. Alicia ALONCON, law student.
30. Ana SALVO DE ESPICA, nurse
31. Rene ..... de MADRES, psychologist, abducted 13.7.76.
32. Victor LIBIANSKY
33. Marta de LIBIANSKY
34. Alba ....., student
35. Jorge Gonzalez CARDOSO, abducted 15.6.76.
36. Elizabeth PEREZ LUTZ, abducted 15.6.76.
37. Hugo MARQUEZ, trade unionist, abducted 15.6.76.
38. Pilar CAMEDONICO abducted June.
39. Liliana BICACLIA, abducted July.

on PVP release

UNITED NATIONS, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities
Twenty-ninth session
Agenda item 3

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 3 (XXIII)

Draft resolution submitted by Mr Bouhdiba, Mr Carter Mr Cassese and Mrs Questiaux

The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,

Deeply concerned at reports from which it appears that basic human rights and fundamental freedoms are at present in jeopardy in Argentina,

Alarmed that the situation disclosed by such reports appears to reveal in particular that in Argentina the life, liberty and security of fugitives from other countries in the region are threatened by groups over which the Government seems to have no control,

Reaffirming the importance of article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person",

Recalling with respect the leading role traditionally played by Latin American countries in the progressive development at the national and international levels of the highest standards for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the role played by Latin American countries in the development of the notion and practice of the right of asylum,

1. Expresses the hope that international standards on human rights will be respected for the benefit of all now deprived of their human rights and fundamental freedoms-

2. Appeals to Governments to offer resettlement, in conformity with the call made on 22 June 1976 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to persons who now have refuge in Argentina:

3. Asks the Secretary-General to request the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to make his report to the General Assembly available to the Commission on Human Rights in advance of its next session, with any additional information he may have on developments relating to the matters referred to in the present resolution.