

4 July 2001

AI Index AMR 13/017/2001 - News Service Nr. 114

## **Argentina : Truth and justice - the only way to deal with the legacy of the past**

The recent decision by Judge María Romilda Servini de Cubría to order the preventive detention of former Navy Captain, Alfredo Astíz, in preparation for his possible extradition to Italy, is a welcome development which should give impetus to the Argentine authorities to tackle crimes committed under military rule, Amnesty International said today.

"The Argentine government must now cooperate in the search for justice in relation to the human rights violations committed during the military government (1976 - 1983) and to redress the persistent failure of civilian governments in Argentina to effectively deal with the legacy of the past," Amnesty International said.

An Italian court requested the detention of Alfredo Astíz and is expected to seek his extradition in connection with the alleged kidnapping and "disappearance" of Angela Maria Aieta, Susana Pegoraro (who was pregnant), and her father Giovanni Pegoraro. The three victims, all of Italian ancestry, "disappeared" in Argentina in 1976 and 1977 respectively.

Amnesty International has urged successive civilian Argentine governments to cooperate with judicial authorities abroad which have been investigating individual cases of human rights violations committed during military rule. The organization has also called on the Argentina government to make null and void the "Full Stop" and "Due Obedience Laws" which have obstructed victims and relatives attempts to find truth and justice within Argentina for over 25 years.

In January 1998, former Navy Capitan Alfredo Astiz publicly admitted to his participation in the "task forces" operations organized by the Navy Mechanics School in Buenos Aires (ESMA), Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada. The operations involved the kidnapping and killing of people considered to be "enemies of the military government". On that occasion, Amnesty International renewed its call to the Argentine authorities to exhaustively investigate the statements, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the victims, and to legally compensate the victims and their relatives.

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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 web : <http://www.amnesty.org>