

ARA - 9/19/76
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news release

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NR 22/76

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE
KIDNAPPINGS BY URUGUAYAN SECURITY FORCES IN BUENOS AIRES

Amnesty International today (Sunday 19 September 1976) urged President Jorge Videla of Argentina to investigate allegations that Uruguayan security officials had kidnapped Uruguayan citizens in Buenos Aires and demanded ransoms for their release.

The allegations were made by Washington Perez, a Uruguayan citizen, in a taped testimony. Senor Perez recently arrived in Sweden from Argentina.

Senor Perez alleged in his testimony that he had been forced to act as an intermediary in ransom demands from Uruguayan officials to the clandestine Uruguayan political group Resistencia Obrera Estudiantil (ROE - Workers Students Resistance) for the release of an ROE member, Gerardo Gatti, who had been abducted in Buenos Aires on 10 June.

Jack Anderson!
office
asked about
Perez. Now
I see
why.

Senor Perez said that he definitely recognized Uruguayan police commissar Campos Hermidas among Senor Gatti's captors. "The others appeared to be members of the Uruguayan police and military, with one Argentinian army colonel," he said.

On 13 July Senor Perez was taken by force to a secret location to meet his friend Senor Gatti. The captors told him to take a message to the ROE group offering to exchange Senor Gatti for a large sum of money. They also offered to release ten other ROE members imprisoned in Uruguay, Senor Perez alleged.

Senor Perez testified that Senor Gatti bore visible marks of torture and that his arm was badly infected.

Negotiations between the ROE group and Senor Gatti's captors broke down on 17 July when the captors informed Senor Perez that the "Gatti business" was over. But they asked him to relay another ransom offer to ROE concerning Uruguayan trade unionist Leon Duarte, abducted in Buenos Aires on 13 July.

Senor Perez alleged that when he was taken to see Senor Duarte, clear marks of torture were visible. Senor Perez said he thought that the secret location in which both Senores Gatti and Duarte were held also housed the 26 Uruguayans abducted in Buenos Aires in the middle of July. One of the captors had made a joking reference to "40 pairs of shoes below".

Amnesty International is a worldwide human rights movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and capital punishment in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of all governments, political factions, ideologies, economic interests and religious groups. It is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. Amnesty International has consultative relations with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization of American States and the Organization of African Unity.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Convinced that his life was in danger, Senor Perez sought the protection of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and took his family to Sweden 15 days later.

Amnesty International said it had received reliable information that the ransom demands were a pretext to discover the whereabouts of ROE members.

The human rights organization said it had asked the Argentinian authorities to make every effort to locate the missing Uruguayans.

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