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First UA: 57/24 AMR 13/8184/2024 Argentina of June 20, 2024

ARGENTINA

33 PROTESTERS IN ARGENTINA FACE UNJUST CHARGES

On June 12, a violent police crackdown on protests in Argentina led to the arbitrary detention of 33 people. They have been charged with various offenses, including attacks on constitutional order and democratic life. We urge the prosecutor to immediately drop these charges.

Given the international and national obligations of the Argentine State to respect, protect, and guarantee the right to freedom of expression and the right of public assembly of all persons, write to the National Prosecutor urging him to:

- Urgently drop the charges against the 33 people detained for protesting on June 12.
- Immediately release those who are still in prison.

Write to:

The National Prosecutor for Criminal and Correctional Matters

Dr. Carlos Stornelli

Email: fiscrf4-nac@mpf.gov.ar

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor,

And copy:

Her Excellency Maria Josefina Martinez Gramuglia

Ambassador

Embassy of the Argentine Republic

81 Metcalfe Street, 7th Floor

Ottawa, ON K1P 6K7

Tel: (613) 236-2351 Fax: (613) 235-2659

Email: ecana@cancilleria.gov.ar

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the new government took office in December 2023, large-scale protests have erupted in Argentina. People are protesting against fiscal cuts and the undermining of human rights. During this time, concerning regulations have been implemented. These regulations criminalize protesters and allow unlawful use of force against them. In several instances, the police have violently repressed demonstrators with unnecessary and excessive force.

Authorities are openly advocating for more repression. They discourage protests by promoting the idea that protesting should be criminalized. On June 12, 2024, while the Senate was discussing the "Ley Bases" law, social, political, and trade union organizations gathered near the Congress to oppose the bill. They were exercising their right to protest.

The state's response to this demonstration involved the new "Protocol for the maintenance of public order in the event of roadblocks," issued by the Ministry of Security on December 12, 2023. The Federal Police, Naval Prefecture, National Gendarmerie, and Buenos Aires City Police participated in the operation. This operation used less lethal weapons like chemical irritants, tonfas, rubber bullets, and water cannons, causing unnecessary injuries to demonstrators. There were also arbitrary arrests and attacks on press workers. Numerous water cannon trucks, motorized and infantry forces fenced in the National Congress area. Police officers without uniforms and members of Prefectura Naval carrying firearms were seen in the area.

In this context, 33 people were arbitrarily detained. Their lawyers and civil society organizations reported this. Amnesty International documented cases including Santiago Adano, a 38-year-old musician; Camila Juárez Oliva, a 33-year-old college student; and Juan Ignacio Spinetto, a 44-year-old lawyer and teacher. They were charged with attacks on constitutional order and democratic life, among other crimes. Santiago and Camila were arrested without participating in the demonstrations. Santiago was exiting the subway when arrested, and Camila was detained ten blocks away. Juan was arrested in San Telmo, over three kilometers from the demonstration, as he was returning home to avoid the repression.

Santiago was released on Friday, but criminal proceedings against him continue. Camila and Juan, along with 14 others, were detained until June 18 without sufficient justification. Five people remain in custody. All detainees face charges of public intimidation, incitement to collective violence, crimes against public authorities and constitutional order, attempted resistance to authority, and disturbing legislative sessions. The Minister of Security and the President labeled the protest as a coup attempt and called the detainees "terrorists." Charges are still being pressed against all 33 individuals.

Please take action as soon as possible until August 14, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.