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REMARKS OF
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TO THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
WASHINGTON, D.C.
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission:

First I want to extend a sincere word of appreciation to you and the members of this Commission for allowing these personal interventions. Since its founding in August 1959, the Commission has genuinely sought to protect and insure that basic human rights be preserved. The Commission was established as the only regional body charged with promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Hemisphere. Now more than ever, with the rise in human rights violations, it is incumbent upon you to exercise your mandate in defending human rights and dignity in all Latin American countries and now, most importantly, in Argentina, in view of current developments.

The Washington Office on Latin America, established a little over two years ago by an ecumenical group of churches, has given priority attention to human rights problems in Latin America. Since our founding, we have watched with concern the growing disregard for human rights in Latin America. Within this capacity many organizations and individuals have petitioned us in behalf of their particular cases. Our office has received documentation from a variety of sources both in Latin America and elsewhere, all recounting serious and systematic violations of human rights. A few weeks ago Rev. Weeks, a North American priest from the La Salette order, came to us just after being released from prison. He urged some investigation on behalf of his friends and associates still in Argentina. The urgency of what we perceive to

be a growing disregard by the military government to increasing reports of arrests, disappearances, assassinations, kidnappings and torture has moved us to petition your Commission. Given the enormous volume of information and documentation we urge this Commission study this disturbing material. We would further urge that the Commission evaluate the possibility of an in loco investigation in Argentina. Senator Kennedy, Congressman Fraser, and others have indicated their desire that the Commission conduct just such an investigation. It is our conviction that an in loco review is of critical importance at this time.

One of the areas of greatest concern is the absence of any legal safeguards for the protection of refugees residing in Argentina. Juan Ferreira, himself an Uruguayan refugee, forced, under threat of death, to flee Argentina with his father, a distinguished former Uruguayan Senator, has provided us with trustworthy information and documentation of human rights violations of Uruguayans residing in Argentina. The detailed material, gathered and verified by exiled Uruguayans, includes information on the denial of police protection to persons in serious danger of losing their lives, lists of persons disappeared, arrested, and assassinated. In addition to cases of police negligence, his presentation documents increasing evidence of cooperation between security forces of Argentina and Uruguay. A case in point is the July 13 abduction of Ana Ines Quadros de Strauch in Buenos Aires. For the subsequent three months, her whereabouts was unknown. Only a few days ago did the Uruguayan authorities, under pressure from a strong international campaign, admit that she was being detained. The peculiar impact of this case was dramatized by the fact that her father, an ex-Ambassador from Uruguay, had vigorously petitioned the Argentine government in her behalf. In addition, we present testimony of an Uruguayan detained by Argentine police in Buenos Aires, acting together with the Intelligence Division of the Uruguay police out of the Campos Hermidas police station. The captive was released on the

condition that he would receive money in exchange for the lives of other abducted Uruguayans. Instead, he sought refuge with the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, and subsequently fled to Sweden, where he made the denunciation to which we refer.

After a review of the extensive documentation received, we have come to the conclusion that the legal remedies for political prisoners and refugees have been exhausted almost in their entirety. Since the state of seige, as declared in November 1974, all constitutional guarantees have been suspended, and state of seige decrees continue to be in effect. The military takeover in March 1976 institutionalized this illegal seizure of power closing down such forums of democratic expression as the National Congress, limiting drastically the rights of free assembly and free speech as well as freedom of the press, and curtailing the free functioning of the Supreme Court. The rights of organization of labor unions and professional groups has been abrogated. No judicial mechanisms function effectively to prevent such violations of human rights. Lawyers, who have attempted to question or defend those politically persecuted, have been assassinated, kidnapped or imprisoned. Given the evidence that the deprivation of human rights has elevated to appalling proportions, the denunciation of these abuses is impossible. The process of presenting habeas corpus has also become almost completely paralyzed. Very few cases are acted upon. The presentation by the Argentine Commission on Human Rights (ANNEX 3) which we submit to you today, comprehensively documents and denounces the inefficiencies of the system of legal recourse and the growing human rights violations in Argentina. Another report, entitled The Situation of Human Rights in Argentina (ANNEX 2) also provides a useful review of the historical developments of the legislative breaches by the Junta, and documentation and testimonies on the deprivation of human rights. I would also like to draw your attention to the numerous very moving personal testimonies of individuals persecuted by the Argentine government which have come to our office

(ANNEXES 4, 9).

On September 28th and 29th, Congressman Donald Fraser, Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the House of Representatives held hearings on the human rights violations in Argentina. In his opening remarks, Mr. Fraser noted with alarm the "level of violence and other serious deprivations of human rights had reached catastrophic proportions." We are submitting the testimony presented at these hearings. They include a statement on the persecution of the church by Father J. Bryan Hehir of the U. S. Catholic Conference, a report on anti-Semitism by Rabbi Burton S. Levinson, chairman of the Latin American Affairs Committee of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and personal account of Father Week's frightening experience in Argentina.

Additional documentation has come from a wide variety of sources. The volume of these abuses and the violence that seems to accompany each one, has prompted many organizations to respond. Not only are the traditional groups such as Amnesty International, the National Council of Churches, the International Federation of the Rights of Man and the International Movement of Catholic Jurists*involved, but many others as well. Among the letters and documents that have been sent to us are:

1) a letter from Esteban Torres, International Division of the United Auto Workers Union indicating his desire to submit documentation; 2) a letter and accompanying documents from Professor Laurence Birns of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs; 3) a letter from Professor Brady Tyson, Chairman, Human Rights Subcommittee of the Latin American Studies Association, introducing their just completed report on Academic Freedom and Human Rights in Argentina; 4) a letter of introduction and presentation of materials by the Catholic Institute for International Relations.

Gentlemen, I have made only cursory reference to each of the annexes I am

* Reports from these groups is appended.

submitting for your consideration. Such quick reference cannot possibly do justice to the gravity and quantity of materials these documents contain.

It has been a sad duty for the Washington Office on Latin America to receive this material. Daily we learn the gruesome details of so many personal tragedies. I cannot urge you too strongly to review, to weigh, to investigate the details contained therein, and then to draw the necessary conclusions and to make the appropriate recommendations. We entrust this material to you because we are confident you will give it the careful consideration it requires. I would like to say that we have presented all of the material on human rights violations in Argentina, but I know, when I return to the office after speaking to you, that new accounts of torture, arrests, and disappearances will await me.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you and for your consideration.

ANNEXES



1. Presentacion (Presentation).
La Comision Argentina por los Derechos Humanos. (Argentine Commission on Human Rights).
Respectfully submitted to the Washington Office on Latin America by
Gustavo Roca, head of Argentine Commission on Human Rights.
June 18, 1976.
2. La Situacion de los Derechos Humanos en la Republica de Argentina.
(The Situation of Human Rights in the Republic of Argentina).
Submitted to the Washington Office on Latin America by
Tom Quigley, International Justice and Peace, U.S. Catholic Conference.
August, 1976.
3. Documento de la Comision Argentina de Solidaridad - Mexico.
(Document of the Argentine Solidarity Commission of Mexico).
Published in Excelsior, Saturday, August 14, 1976.
Directors: Esteban Richi, Noe Jitrik, Raphael Perez, Oscar Pedrotta,
Miguel Rodriguez, Haydee Birgin, Javier Gonzalez.
4. A. Testimony: Submitted by the Comision Argentina por los Derechos Humanos.
Gustavo Roca.
 1. Testimony on detentions and tortures
 2. Testimony on Tortures #1
 3. Testimony on Tortures #2
 4. Testimony by relatives of those abducted or taken political prisoners.
 B. Testimony by Antonio Riesle, Argentine priest who decided to leave Argentina
because of political situation: repression of church, jails and torture,
and refugees.
5. Death and Violence in Argentina.
Compiled by a group of priests in Argentina.
Published and translated by CIIR - Catholic Institute for International Relations.
18 October 1976.
6. Newspaper clippings.
Human Rights and the Church.
7. Press.
Submitted to the Washington Office on Latin America by
Gustavo Roca, head of the Comision Argentina de Solidaridad, Mexico.
8. A Report on Academic Freedom and Human Rights in Argentina.
Prepared by the Subcommittee on Academic Freedom and Human Rights in Argentina,
Latin American Studies Association.
May, 1976.

9. Attack on Academic Freedom in Argentina.
Amnesty International.
International Secretariat, 53 Theobald's Road, London, England, WC1X 8SP
6 September 1976.
10. Translation of letter sent to President Videla by Mexican Scientists and Intellectuals.
--Centro de Investigacion de Instituto Politecnico Nacional
--Universidad Autonoma de Puebla
--UNAM
--Writers and Artists
--Instituto Nacional de Energia Nuclear
11. List of People (Refugees) detained or missing in Argentina.
Source: Amnesty International
International Secretariat, 53 Theobald's Road, London, England, WC1X 8SP
June 17, 1976.
12. Uruguay Information Project.
Submitted by Juan R. Ferreira.
November 3, 1976.
13. Report prepared by a Mission to Argentina sponsored by
The International Federation of the Rights of Man, and
The International Movement of Catholic Jurists.
Submitted by Rev. William Wipfler, National Council of Churches.
14. Argentina and Anti-Semitism in the Post Peronist Era.
Prepared by the World Union of Jewish Students.
Submitted by Marcus Raskin, Co-Director, Institute for Policy Studies.
15. Letter requesting permission to submit material on violations of trade unions.
Submitted by Esteban Torres, Assistant Director
International Affairs Department, United Automobile Workers Union.
November 2, 1976.
16. Human Rights Violation - Specific Cases.
Submitted by Professor Laurence Birns, Director
Council on Hemispheric Affairs
November 2, 1976.
17. Testimony Received by the Subcommittee on International Organizations of
The House of Representative, Congress of the United States,
September 28 and 29, 1976.
Submitted by the Honorable Donald Fraser, Chairman.