

# ARGENTINE COMMISSION for HUMAN RIGHTS

COMISION ARGENTINA POR LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS (CADHU)

Washington, D. C. Information Bureau



International Offices:

Geneva  
Rome  
Paris  
Mexico City

Washington DC, February 12th, 1977

President Jimmy Carter  
White House  
Washington DC

Dear President Carter:

In the next few weeks your administration will make some important decisions on U.S. - Argentina relations. The State Department will have to determine whether or not to request any monies for Military Assistance to the Argentine military regime. This decision is tied by law to the human rights situation there. This decision will set the tone for U.S. - Argentina relations in the next few years. By extension, it will reflect on U.S. relations with most Latin American countries ruled by military dictatorships. Argentina, therefore, is in many ways a test case.

Your administration's position on the question of Military Assistance to Argentina will test the extent to which you will contrast your foreign policy with that of the preceding administration as it is affected by the issue of human rights. It will also test your administration's willingness to apply human rights criteria in dealing with all countries, including those which see themselves as allies of the United States, and the United States as their ally.

Similarly, Argentina will test Congress' own consistency and determination to apply and to enforce, the laws it passed to forbid Military Assistance for countries which persistently violate universally recognized human rights.

The Argentine military see the upcoming decisions as a test of the United States willingness to stay by their side regardless of their record on human rights, providing them with the legitimacy and confidence which they so obviously lack.

To the democratic forces in Argentina your administration's decision will either indicate the continuation of the U.S. policy of uncritical support of military regimes, or it will signal a change and a recognition that the only truly viable alternative for Latin America is a rapid return to Constitutional rule, democratic liberties, and, consequently, respect for human rights.



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Two weeks ago we sent you a copy of a comprehensive report we prepared for U.S. government decision makers. Since then we have talked to State Department officials, and Congresspeople on this issue. No one could seriously challenge the information we provided in our report. Everyone admitted that the United States Government had to respond to the situation, yet few were willing to speak out with firmness. Most, aware of the implications of the change of Administration, were waiting for you to set the tone for the relationship the United States will have with military regimes such as the one in Argentina.

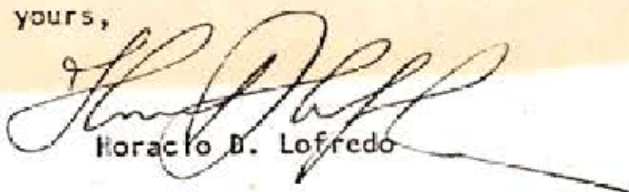
Some officials we talked to complained with some bitterness and some skepticism, that previous diplomatic initiatives on the part of the United States intended to encourage respect for human rights in Latin America, were met with indifference and resentment. We were emphatic in affirming that this response resulted from the not totally unjustified belief on the part of these military regimes, that the United States would ultimately stay with them. The timid, mostly rethorical, and often contradictory character of these initiatives during the past administration greatly contributed to this attitude. Whatever has been done until now on this issue was done in hesitance, it was too little and always too late.

For these reasons we urge you to speak out on the case of Argentina, and to condemn publicly, with forcefulness and without ambivalence, the violations of human rights taking place there. The situation in Argentina can no longer be ignored.

Strong statements of condemnation from your administration, however, must be accompanied by specific political and diplomatic steps if they are to be effective. There are currently in Congress several different initiatives intended to suspend all Military and Economic Assistance to Argentina. We feel it would be important for your administration to confer and consult with Senator Humphrey, Senator Kennedy, Representative Koch, Representative Harkin, and Representative Fraser, on the least confrontational and most effective way to implement the interruption of Military Assistance to Argentina, as well as on other diplomatic measures intended to improve the human rights situation and contribute to the prompt restoration of democratic government in Argentina.

Respectfully yours,

  
Olga Talamante

  
Horacio B. Lofredo