

## Argentina's journalists face death threats and harassment

"Police beatings are very familiar to press photographers. They have already become part of the profession's everyday reality." Christian Frolich, photojournalist from the Buenos Aires newspaper *Crónica*

Eduardo Olivares, a journalist for Radio Dimensión, a radio station in San Luis Province, was beaten to the ground and kicked by members of the anti-riot squad from the provincial police as he covered a demonstration by municipal employees in March. The police had reportedly been openly hostile to journalists covering the event and had fired rubber bullets at them.

There have been numerous reports of Argentine journalists being physically assaulted by members of the security forces during demonstrations against the government's handling of the economic crisis since 2001. The economic collapse has had a devastating impact on most sectors of the population and many journalists have seen their own human rights violated as they have reported on issues that affect the human rights of their fellow citizens.

Journalists have found that, despite showing their accreditation, they are often deliberately targeted by police and the security forces.

Television, radio and print journalists often face threats, intimidation and physical violence when reporting the alleged corrupt activities of public officials.

Clara Britos, owner and editor of the monthly newspaper *La Tapa* in Buenos Aires Province, has frequently been intimidated and received death threats for her investigations into allegations of corruption involving local officials.

She received repeated phone calls in 2003, during which recordings of screams and gunshots were played and death threats were made against her children. In June 2003 a caller threatened to kill her son, saying: "Do you want to see him with a bullet in his chest...?" There was also an attempt to burn down her house while she, her husband and their four children were asleep inside, despite police guards being stationed in front of the house. They were woken by the smoke and managed to extinguish the fire.

Information from the authorities indicates that official complaints submitted by Clara Britos were investigated. However, no further information has been forthcoming and AI is not aware of their progress or outcome. AI is concerned about the trend of intimidation and assault against journalists and their families in Argentina. AI is also concerned at the apparent lack of adequate investigation into attacks against the media. This lack of conclusive investigations creates a climate of impunity which undermines the legitimate role of journalists in objective, investigative reporting which should be protected by the authorities.

*Excerpted from Amnesty International "The Wire," August 2004.*