

DATE
19/04/2010

Sr. Anibal Florencio Randazzo
Ministro del Interior
25 de Mayo 101/145 (1002)
Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires
Argentina

Re: **Concerns regarding the case of lawyer Ms. Maria Isabel Cacciopolis**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents around one million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

We express our concern over the situation that faces Ms. Maria Isabel Cacciopolis, an Argentinian lawyer who is well known for representing plaintiffs in human rights violations cases that took place in the Argentinian region of Concepcion de Uruguay, during the military dictatorship. Among others, she represents Professor César Manuel Román, plaintiff in a human rights violations case of 1976 concerning teenagers from the school of Concepción de Uruguay, in the region of Entre Rios.

According to information received, on 8 April 2010, unidentified attackers entered by force in her office causing serious damage to it. The assailants stole documentation and they also set some papers and a computer on fire. The fire destroyed documentation concerning different cases of human rights violations which were dealt with by this lawyer.

We have been also informed that this was not the first time Ms. Maria Isabel Cacciopolis has been the object of threats.

The CCBE condemns these acts which seem to us aimed at obstructing her professional activity, in particular her work defending human rights.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Article of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

In view of the above, we urge the Argentinean authorities to take immediate and effective steps to investigate these acts and to guarantee the protection of lawyers in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JMD', written over a horizontal line.

JOSÉ-MARÍA DAVÓ-FERNÁNDEZ
President