

Doc\_Number: GDE00186

# Terror in Buenos Aires : The Islamic Republic's Forgotten Crime Against Humanity

July 18, 2009

"Principle 2: Every people has the inalienable right to know the truth about past events concerning the perpetration of heinous crimes and about the circumstances and reasons that led, through massive or systematic violations, to the perpetration of those crimes."

- United Nations Commission on Human Rights, *Impunity: Report of the independent expert to update the Set of principles to combat impunity*, Diane Orentlicher"<sup>[1]</sup>

[Paola Sara Czyzewski](#), a 21-year-old law student, and 23-year-old [Diego de Pirro](#), who studied economics, will never know the reasons for the heinous crime that shattered their hopes and took their lives at approximately 9:05 on the morning of July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1994. Paola and Diego were both killed when a van containing 275 kilograms of explosives turned a seven-story building into rubble on Pastor Street in Buenos Aires that day. The target of the bombing was *AMIA* (*Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina*), a mutual aid society. The explosion, which took the lives of 85 citizens and injured 150 more, mostly of Jewish heritage, was neither an accident nor a mistake.

In 2006, Argentina's investigation determined that the order for the bombing had come from a special committee composed of the highest ranking Iranian leaders and that Iranian diplomats and agents commissioned by them helped with the logistics and the funding of the operation. The powerful ammonium nitrate bomb was detonated in the morning with the deliberate intention of bringing maximum harm to the children, women, and men located inside and outside the AMIA headquarters.

This was not the first time that the Islamic Republic's leaders, directly or through proxies, had targeted civilians to further their political and military goals. The bombing of the [U.S.](#) and French embassies in Lebanon and Kuwait in 1983-84 (6 killed, 5 wounded); of various crowded public places in Paris, such as department stores, a post office, and the Paris Metro in 1985-86 (13 killed, 260 wounded); and of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992 (29 killed, 242 wounded) are just a few among the bombing cases preceding the attack on AMIA.

iranrights.org/english/newsletter-12.php

## Other recent newsletters

[Iran: In Support of the International Campaign Against the Death Penalty](#)

February 22, 2011

[Iran Uses the Holidays to Announce the Imminent Execution of a Student](#)

December 24, 2010

[Iran Cannot Hide the Truth Behind Sakineh](#)

December 10, 2010

[Iran: A Reflection on the Death Penalty and a Failed Anti-Narcotic Campaign](#)

October 31, 2010

[Iran's Interrupted Lives](#)

October 1, 2010

[Iran's leadership guilty of crimes against humanity](#)

June 8, 2010

[Three Iranian human rights activists receive the Lech Walesa Prize](#)

September 29, 2009

[Authorization Denied: The high cost of the public expression of dissent in Iran](#)

July 9, 2009

[Neither Free Nor Fair, Elections in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#)

June 12, 2009

[Thirty Years Ago in Iran](#)

February 11, 2009

» [And more...](#)

## Visit the Human Rights and Democracy Library

[International Human Rights Organizations' Reports on Human Rights Abuses in Iran](#)

[Testimonies of Victims and Perpetrators of Human Rights Abuses in Iran](#)

Though the victims in all these terrorist attacks were from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, religions, and professions, they had, in death, much in common. They were chosen to die a cruel and brutal death by individuals whom they did not know; those who ordered the attacks on them were never brought to justice; and the victims' families and the attacks' survivors were, for the most part, never fully informed about the circumstances and reasons for the bombings.

In the case of AMIA, a deliberately ineffective initial investigation by Argentine authorities, marred by carelessness and irregularities, provided little information. It was only after a group of victims, [Memoria Activa](#), took their case to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission in 1999 that Argentina admitted its violation of the victims' right to life by its failure to adequately investigate the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy and to take appropriate security measures to prevent another such bomb attack on Argentine territory.

Almost ten years after the AMIA bombing, and in spite of the loss of key evidence, a new and more credible investigation led to the indictment of Iranian officials, including Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's president at the time of the attack. In 2007, INTERPOL (the International Criminal Police Organization) issued arrest warrants for six of these officials, including Ali Fallahian, the former Minister of Intelligence, Mohsen Rabbani, the Iranian cultural attaché in Buenos Aires, and Mohsen Rezai, the former commander of the Revolutionary Guards. But Islamic Republic authorities denied their involvement, and AMIA's survivors and the relatives of its victims, as in many other similar cases, still do not know the whole truth. Those details lie secreted within the Islamic Republic's inner circles, and perhaps in the inaccessible folders of various countries' secret services.

The recurrent pattern of bombing and extrajudicial killings sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) is rooted in the failure of States – on whose territories these crimes were committed – to undertake prompt, thorough, independent, and impartial investigations of IRI-sponsored violations of human rights. During the last thirty years, those states have consistently avoided taking appropriate measures in respect to the perpetrators, particularly in the area of criminal justice. By evading its responsibility to bring to justice the sponsors and the perpetrators of hostage taking, bombing, and assassinations, the international community has, de facto, indicated that those responsible for such crimes may enjoy impunity. Thus, it has failed to deter them from pursuing criminal schemes such as the AMIA bombing.

Iranian citizens, for the most part, [have no say](#) in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy, let alone in decisions such as that of the bombing of AMIA. But they can, whether in Iran or elsewhere, show solidarity with victims by remembering them

[Iran's Pro-democracy Voices](#)

» [And more...](#)

and calling for justice.

To commemorate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AMIA bombing, the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation (ABF) is releasing a report, "[Terror in Buenos Aires: The Islamic Republic's Forgotten Crime Against Humanity](#)," qualifying the AMIA bombing as a crime against humanity. On this occasion, ABF has also documented AMIA victims' stories in [Omid, a Memorial in Defense of Human Rights](#), where their memory shall be preserved and honored along with that [of thousands of their Iranian and non-Iranian](#) fellow human beings who have fallen victim to gross human rights violations perpetrated by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Fifteen years after that bloody Monday, no one among those who ordered the AMIA attack has been brought to justice. Neither [Jorge Antunez](#), the 18-year-old who worked at a bar around the corner from AMIA, nor the 5-year-old [Sebastian Barreiro](#), who happened to walk by AMIA's door, knew the absurd logic of those who, from another continent thousands of miles away, took their lives to settle unrelated scores. Their loved ones, however, and all those who survived the bombing have the right to know the truth and to see justice served.

Copyright © 2011, Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation † [Back to top](#)