

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2004

The Honorable Preeta Bansal
Chair
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
800 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 790
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairwoman Bansal:

As you know, on July 18, 1994, the Argentine Jewish Community lost 86 of its members, with 300 others injured, in a bomb attack against the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires. The AMIA bombing remains one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents since the end of World War II, and tragically, a full-scale investigation and legal proceedings against those involved did not begin until many years after the crime.

Three years ago, it appeared that the victims of that heinous crime would finally receive the justice they deserve. At that time, Argentine prosecutors initiated legal proceedings against a number of individuals suspected of involvement in the AMIA bombing. The President of Argentina, Nestor Kirchner, is to be commended for the important role he played in advancing and facilitating those proceedings.

Sadly, on September 2nd of this year, a three-judge panel acquitted five men under indictment as accomplices in the AMIA bombing. Their acquittal appears to be the result of improprieties by Juan Jose Galeano, the former investigating judge who was removed following allegations that he permitted a defendant to be paid for testimony.

It is heartening that this judicial panel has directed investigators to determine what role officials from former President Carlos Menem's administration might have played in impeding inquiries into the AMIA bombing. President Kirchner's promise to investigate the trial's irregularities is also a positive sign. Nonetheless, the pervasive irregularities, obfuscation, and corruption that seem to have plagued this entire process raise concerns that those responsible for the murder of 86 innocent people might never be held accountable for their criminal acts.

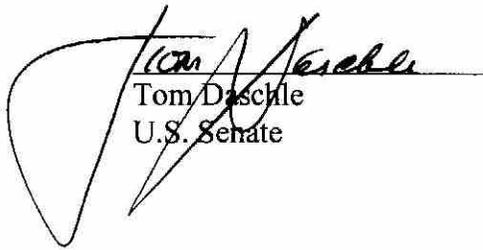
What occurred on that fateful day in July was more than an attack against the Argentine Jewish community – it was an attack against people everywhere who hold dear the right to practice their religion openly and without fear. The AMIA bombing also continues to serve as a vivid reminder that the international community must remain vigilant in its battle against anti-Semitism, wherever it rears its ugly head.

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In light of these ever-present realities, we urge that the commission monitor closely the progress of the Argentine government in bringing those responsible for the AMIA bombing to justice and report periodically to Congress about the results of your efforts to monitor this issue.

Sincerely,



Tom Daschle
U.S. Senate



Christopher J. Dodd
U.S. Senate