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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 16, 1978

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

() Release (X) Excise () Deny

Exemption(s): B6

Declassify: () In Part () In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

Mr. S. Harrison Dogole

Dear Mr. Dogole:

Thank you for your April 26 letter to Robert J. Lipshutz, who has provided a copy to Secretary Vance, concerning the situation of the Jewish community in Argentina. I have been asked to respond.

On numerous occasions the Department has expressed its concern to the Argentine Government about reports of anti-Semitism in that country. When Secretary Vance was in Argentina in November of last year, the question was discussed. Our Ambassador continues to stress to the Argentines our concern over these reports. Argentine government officials have responded to our concern by noting they strenuously oppose anti-Semitism, that it is not Argentine Government policy and that specific legislation has been passed which makes it a punishable offense to incite racial hatred or violence.

Although there are still anti-Semitic magazines published in Argentina, the incidences of open anti-Semitic activities -- swastikas painted on synagogues, threats to Jewish leaders -- which occurred in 1976 and early 1977 have greatly decreased. The present major concern of U.S. Jewry is the reports of discriminatory treatment meted out to some Jews who are imprisoned in Argentina. We have heard that certain jailers berate prisoners and treat them more harshly than gentile prisoners. Our concern over these reports has been conveyed to the Argentine authorities.

In the case of Jacobo Timerman, the United States has made repeated efforts on his behalf. President Carter raised his case with Argentine President Videla when the latter was in Washington for the Panama Canal Treaties signing Ceremony, and Secretary Vance reviewed his case in detail when he visited Argentina in late November. Since then, our Ambassador and Department officials have continued to press for an early resolution of Mr. Timerman's case. At present, he is under house arrest.

The Administration believes strongly that human rights must be a cornerstone of foreign policy. The inquiries and representations which we have made in Argentina on behalf of thousands of disappeared and detained individuals are an example of U.S. actions to strengthen human rights.

In addition, a number of actions have been taken by the United States to convey to the Argentines how strongly committed we are to human rights -- grant military training for Argentina has been withdrawn, arms sales have been held back, and we have linked our vote in the International Financial Institutions to the Argentine record on human rights. The Argentines are fully aware that improvement in our relations is dependent on their observance of human rights. Indeed, the Congress has now legislated, as part of the Foreign Assistance Act, that there will be no new arms transfers to Argentina without major human rights improvements.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Zimmermann, Director
Office of East Coast Affairs
Bureau of Inter-American Affairs

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