



# UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Producer: AUSTIN HAEBERLE  
Script version: FINAL  
Duration: 5'29"

ARGENTINA: JUAN MENDEZ - CAMPAIGNER AGAINST TORTURE (5'29")

### INTRO:

Under Argentina's military dictatorship in the 1970s torture was widespread – and many thousands were “disappeared”. A courageous lawyer was among those who suffered – but today he's campaigning to end torture worldwide.

### VIDEO

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE OF CONFLICT  
IN ARGENTINA

### AUDIO

JUAN MENDEZ (In Spanish)  
*One of the most difficult aspects of my work is the feeling that we have lost our sense of universally condemning torture. There is a perception that torture is necessary, dirty, but somebody has got to do it. In reality there's never a scenario where you have to stop a terrorist exploding a bomb.\_(24")*

TEXT ON SCREEN

Military dictatorships dominated Latin America in the 1970's. In Argentina, Juan Mendez began his law career defending political prisoners.

MENDEZ ON CAMERA

ARCHIVE CONFLICT FOOTAGE  
ARGENTINA

TEXT ON SCREEN

On August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Juan was abducted by police in civilian clothing. ....and taken to one of Argentina's many clandestine detention centres, like this one in the city of Rosario.

VARIOUS TORTURE CHAMBER  
VIDEO

TEXT ON SCREEN

Military dictatorships dominated Latin America in the 1970's, in Argentina, Juan Mendez began his law career defending political prisoners.

JUAN MENDEZ (In Spanish)

*With more detentions each day, more prisoners to defend, and more cases of torture, the responsibility fell on a group of younger lawyers, like me. And what we mostly did is keep our clients' clandestine detention as short as possible to limit the torture as short as possible. (26")*

*We knew things were getting more tense, we just didn't think that anything was going to happen to us. Looking back, we weren't safe. We were walking on the edge of a precipice. (14)"*

TEXT ON SCREEN

On August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Juan was abducted by police in civilian clothing. ....and taken to one of Argentina's many clandestine detention centres, like this one in the city of Rosario

JUAN MENDEZ (In Spanish)

*Each time they got me out of their car at an interrogation centre or police station, I don't know where, that's when the torture sessions began. (12")*

*They put me on a table, hands and feet stretched out and tied down, always blindfolded, and they applied the electric prod. But not the kind used on cattle. That has small voltage. This was an instrument for torture, in which they could change the voltage. They stripped me of my clothes and they applied this instrument each time more violently, all over my body. (28”)*

*My greatest fear was that they'd come back for more. I knew if they didn't, I was going to survive and put in front of a judge to explain that there was no reason to keep me detained. (17”)*

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

Under a state of siege in Argentina, Juan remained in detention for a year and a half.

MENDEZ ON CAMERA

**FONT ON UPPER LEFT SCREEN**

Excavation of a clandestine detention centre, Buenos Aires

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

30,000 Argentinians were 'disappeared' from 1975 - 1983

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

Under a state of siege in Argentina, Juan remained in detention for a year and a half.

**JUAN MENDEZ** (In Spanish)

*And out on the streets, they had a plan of forcibly “disappear” people. They detained people, but never took them to jail, but to concentration camps. they were savagely tortured and killed. (14”)*

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

30,000 Argentinians were 'disappeared' from 1975 - 1983

**JUAN MENDEZ** (In Spanish)

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

Due to international pressure by Amnesty International, Juan was allowed to go into exile.

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

As a human rights lawyer, Juan Mendez has dedicated the last 40 years to ending torture.

As Special Rapporteur on Torture, he conducts country visits and reports on findings to the United Nations.

MENDEZ ON CAMERA

STILLS OF MENDEZ AT CONFERENCE

MENDEZ ON CAMERA

*This is how torture happens in reality. There is never a bomb that is about to explode scenario. Torture happens against a great number of people. What they want is to punish (13”)*

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

Due to international pressure by Amnesty International, Juan was allowed to go into exile.

**JUAN MENDEZ** (In Spanish)

*In 1977, I came to the United States to be reunited with my family to start our lives over again. But also always remembering how to help those left behind in Argentina. (14”)*

MUSIC

**TEXT ON SCREEN**

As a human rights lawyer, Juan Mendez has dedicated the last 40 years to ending torture.

As Special Rapporteur on Torture, he conducts country visits and reports on findings to the United Nations.

**JUAN MENDEZ** (In Spanish)

*For those unable to defend their rights at the national level, which may be a major part of the world...I'd say more than two thirds of the world, the UN may be the only possible chance for justice. So, when we visit a country the attention of the media is enormous, and it energizes civil society, the*

## CONFERENCE NI NEW YORK

### FONT:

His reports are made public at the UN  
in New York

...and at the UN Human Rights Council  
in Geneva

### TEXT ON SCREEN

Juan Mendez' chief torturer is now  
Serving a life sentence for torture,  
Murder and "disappearances".

*organisations for victims, their families  
and, prisoners themselves. It puts  
everyone in a position to make the  
situation better. (36")*

### *NATSOT (at conference)*

*"For torture, I think this is one of those  
areas where the convention leaves a  
lot of room for effective implementation*

*(at press conference) "The states are  
also obliged to investigate, prosecute  
and punish those who may be  
responsible.*

### *(Press gathering) "(in Spanish)*

JUAN MENDEZ (In Spanish)

*Even today, I don't know how I'm still  
affected by the sessions of torture. I  
think what has helped me is being able  
to share my story so that people of  
goodwill everywhere will understand  
torture and, why we need to fight it.  
(24")*