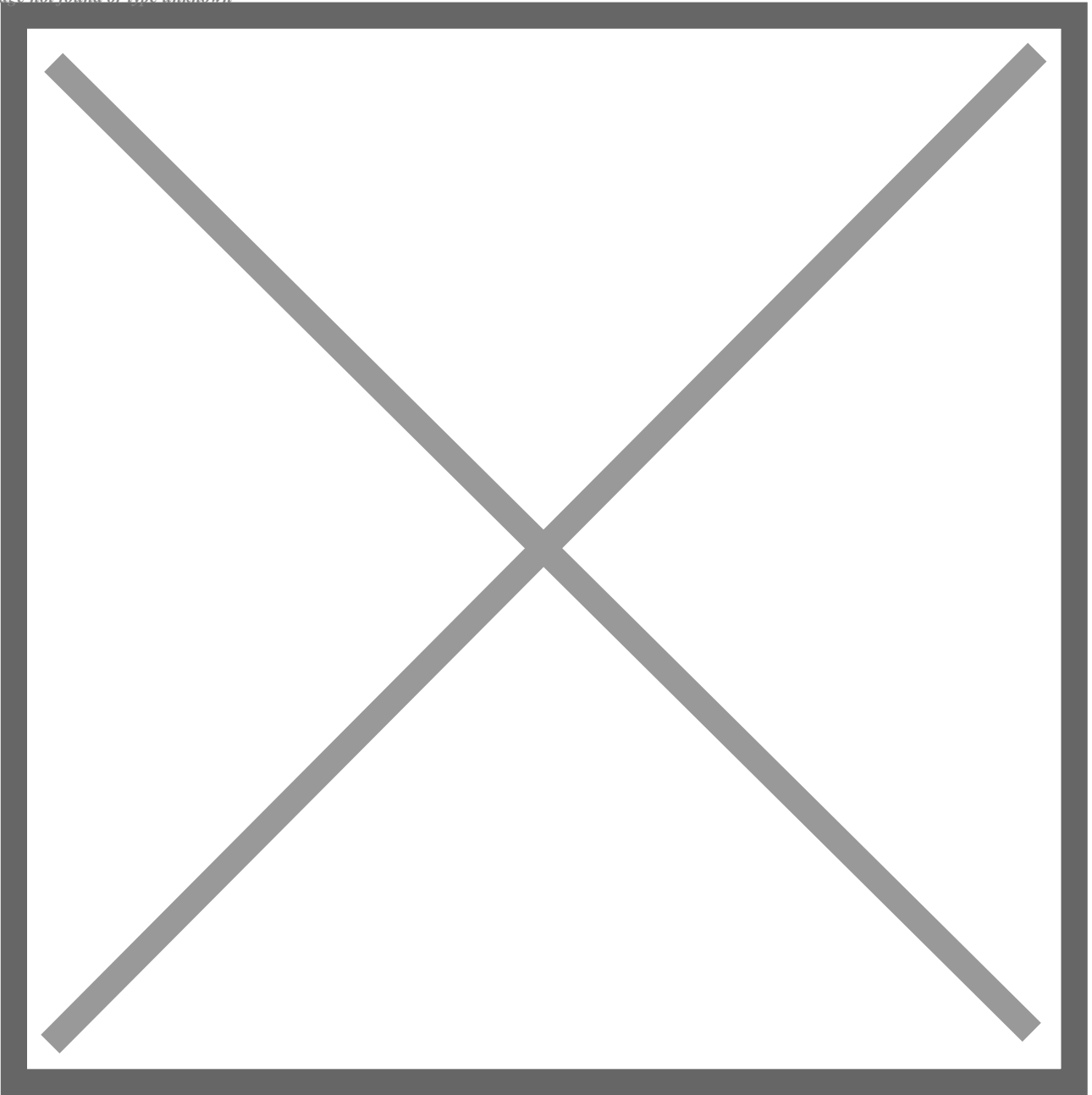


Pope Francis sends condolences on death of Hebe de Bonafini

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Pope Francis sent on Monday a letter of condolences to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association on the occasion of the death on Sunday of the president of the Argentinean organization, Hebe de Bonafini.

Vatican City, November 22 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has sent a letter of condolences to the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association on the occasion of the death on Sunday of the president of the Argentinean organization, Hebe de Bonafini.

"She knew how to transform like you, marked by the pain of her disappeared sons and daughters, in a tireless search for the defense of the rights of the most marginalized and invisible," said the Supreme Pontiff. Pope Francis highlighted "her courage and bravery, at times when silence prevailed, she promoted and then kept alive the search for truth, memory and justice".

"A search that led her to march so that oblivion would not take over the streets and history and that commitment to others would be the best word and antidote against the atrocities that were suffered," he said. "I remember, in the meeting we had at the Vatican, the passion she transmitted to me for wanting to give a voice to those who did not have one," Francis said about Hebe de Bonafini's visit to the Vatican State in 2016.

According to the Argentinean newspaper *Página 12*, the relationship between Hebe de Bonafini and Pope Francis went through times of harsh criticism, since being Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 2002 Jorge Bergoglio (now Pope Francis) tried to hinder a protest of the Mothers. However, the relationship changed with the passing of time and they consolidated a good friendship.

Hebe de Bonafini died on Sunday, after being hospitalized for a week at the Italian Hospital of La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires. After her death, numerous organizations, personalities and activists sent messages of condolences and recognition to the figure of the president of the Plaza de Mayo.

The organization *Pañuelos en Rebeldía* stated that "we bid farewell with sorrow to Hebe, together with whom we walked in many moments, and shared the first magnificent years of the creation of the *Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo*".

"Hebe is part of the memory and history of the struggle against the dictatorship, she has been a great example of resistance and courage, and a companion with whom we have built solidarity and rebellious projects", said the collective.

For her part, the militant of the *Frente Patria Grande*, Carina López Monja, valued Hebe as "the one who spoke to us of revolution when we began to fight; the one who fought side by side in the struggle for justice for Darío and Maxi, the internationalist who embraced back in 2002 the struggle of the Landless Movement of Brazil and of the *piqueteros* in Argentina".

After confirming the news on Sunday, the Mothers Association of Plaza de Mayo communicated that "Hebe de Bonafini, changed house, as she always said about her companions who preceded her in leaving. She will continue forever in the Plaza de Mayo, not one step backwards!

Hebe de Bonafini founded the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association to make visible the disappearance of people, including her children during the last dictatorship in Argentina, from 1976 to 1983.

To this end, she took as a reference point April 30, 1977, when approximately sixteen women marched, arm in arm, around the Pyramid of May in protest against the uncertainty of the whereabouts of their disappeared children.

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