

Argentina authorizes lethal force on those who 'act as threat'



Buenos Aires, December 5 (RHC)-- Argentina's Security Minister Patricia Bullrich is defending a presidential decree that allows national security forces to use lethal force in the case of "imminent danger" or when they "suspect" that a person may be holding a weapon.

The measure, released Tuesday, would close the controversial case against off-duty Buenos Aires police officer, Luis Chocobar who, last December shot 18-year-old Juan Pablo Kukoc twice in the back after he robbed a tourist. Kukoc later died. The new measure, says local media would absolve the 31-year-old agent because he fired at a fleeing assailant who "represented imminent danger."

Imminent danger is defined as when a civilian "acts as a threat to cause possible death or serious injury," meaning that police can now use lethal force against a person even if they are unarmed.

The initiative makes it legal for authorities to shoot a person if they have what appears to be a gun or shoot someone who is part of a group where a weapon is present. If police suspect that a person may draw a weapon, the officer can shoot to kill -- no questions asked.

Bullrich defended the protocol last Friday at the beginning of the G-20 economic summit held over the weekend in the Argentine capital saying the measure would be enforced only when foreign delegations were in town. However, Pagina 12 Media says the policy has no timeframe and was introduced on

Tuesday, contradicting the minister's statement.

The government was criticized for its excessive use of police force against G-20 demonstrators last weekend.

Juan Pablo's mother, Ivonne Kukoc, 40, came out against Bullrich and the new regulation Tuesday saying: "They are going to kill poor kids like dogs. This authorizes the death penalty in Argentina," adding: "Bullrich should have resigned."

In a press conference on the same day, Kukoc said that Bullrich is "pitching a battle against the poor and young. "It is very sad to know that we have a President and a Security Minister without a heart who act with such impunity. They are sending (the police) to kill young people endorsing the trigger. This won't end crime," said the crying mother.

"Patricia Bullrich is putting together a pitched battle. Many kids will die at the hands of the police without having a second chance at anything." She commented that her son "was wrong, but Chocobar didn't have to kill him like a dog." Kukoc added she hoped the policeman would be convicted "because he is a murderer."

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