

6-1-1989

## Rioting & Looting In Argentina: Summary Of Events, May 29-may 31

John Neagle

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

---

### Recommended Citation

Neagle, John. "Rioting & Looting In Argentina: Summary Of Events, May 29-may 31." (1989). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/3176>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **Rioting & Looting In Argentina: Summary Of Events, May 29-may 31**

*by John Neagle*

*Category/Department: General*

*Published: Thursday, June 1, 1989*

May 29: Rioting and looting, particularly of food stores, was reported in several Argentine cities. The country's third-largest city, Rosario (Santa Fe province), appeared to be the worst hit by turmoil. Four people were shot and killed, 60 wounded and 600 arrested Monday in Rosario. President Raul Alfonsin declared a 30-day state of siege which permits police to conduct raids without warrants and make arrests without specific charges. (See also Chronicle, 05/30/89.) May 30: Despite the state of siege, looting of grocery shops and rioting was reported in Rosario, Mendoza, Cordoba, La Plata and Tucuman, and about a dozen working class suburbs of Buenos Aires. Schools in Rosario remained closed and most businesses did not open. Armed bands reportedly drove through the city's deserted streets after dark, shot at police stations and looted homes and stores. Radio Rosario reported that at least seven supermarkets and food warehouses had been looted early Tuesday morning in the northern and southern suburbs of the city. An undetermined number of people were killed in the Buenos Aires suburbs of San Miguel and Quilmes during a riot in which looters broke windows and emptied shelves in furniture stores, bars, sports and shoe stores. A bus driver tried to prevent his bus from being stolen and was fatally shot. In the Buenos Aires suburb of Moreno, a sixth person was killed Tuesday "under confusing circumstances," local news agencies reported. Noise bombs set off in the central business district injured six passersby. According to the local media, looting incidents in greater Buenos Aires resulted in four wounded and 500 arrests on Tuesday. Bombs exploded outside the local offices of the Radical Civic Union and Communist parties in the suburbs of Belgrano and Once. One person was slightly injured, and substantial material damage reported. No one claimed responsibility for the blasts. AP reported that by Tuesday night, more than 1,000 people had been arrested in Rosario and about 500 looters arrested in other cities. Local news sources cited by AP reported that the death toll had reached 11, six having been killed on Tuesday. Hundreds of people were injured, most in Rosario. President-elect of the Justicialista (Peronist) party, Carlos Menem, told reporters that he supported President Alfonsin's decision to impose a state of siege. According to Interior Minister Juan Carlos Pugliese, "all the evidence we have in our possession tells us that this situation has been fed by ultraleftists." The Justicialista party said it supported the state of siege, but added that the unrest was the fruit of "hunger and misery." The food riots have increased pressure on Alfonsin to step down before his six-year term ends Dec. 10. The General Workers Confederation (CGT), the country's largest labor coalition, and the Argentine Industrial Union, the nation's most influential business group asked Menem to take office early. In Caracas, Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez blamed creditor nations' unwillingness to offer meaningful solutions to the debt crisis has provoked social and political tensions in debtor nations, evidenced in the recent food riots in Argentina. In remarks to reporters, Perez said, "The situation in Argentina is extremely serious, given that the country has been afflicted with an economic crisis which has steadily worsened...We, the Latin American countries, are also responsible for the errors we have committed, but we have the ability to meet these new situations. The creditor nations, however, have closed the door in our faces." Perez pointed out that the Argentine government has made numerous efforts to restructure its foreign debt and implement domestic economic

reforms. However, he said, Buenos Aires has not received the necessary degree of attention and support from "the international economic system." In late February, rioting broke out in Venezuela following the government's announcement of austerity policies. Over 3,000 stores were looted, and at least 300 people killed and 2,000 wounded. May 31: Officials described major cities as mostly calm Wednesday morning. Shops and offices opened in Buenos Aires. In an all-night session, the Senate and House of Deputies ratified the 30-day state of siege, increased benefits for workers and retirees and allotted an unspecified amount of money for a food and medicine distribution plan. The minimum pension for retirees will increase to about \$36 per month, and the minimum for widows to about \$33. Next, a Radical party deputy introduced a bill that would provide emergency funds to owners of small- and medium-size supermarkets and other shops looted during the recent unrest. Interior Minister Pugliese told journalists that the death toll was less than 15, despite certain reports to the contrary. Next, he acknowledged that security forces were responsible for two deaths resulting from the use of rubber bullets. Police were not responsible, he added, for all other deaths and injuries resulting from the use of firearms. Pugliese reiterated accusations against leftists described as "instigators and agitators," but said the government would take no additional measures against leftist suspects. Hours earlier, security agents had received orders to conduct search and seizure actions at leftist party offices and meeting places. Governor of San Luis province, Adolfo Rodriguez, announced an emergency food program, including direct sales of basic food products at a 50% discount. Also included was the addition of bread and sweets to the milk ration distributed to 34,000 students in primary and secondary schools. The provincial legislature approved a bill establishing a 90-day state of "social emergency." Following a meeting with President Alfonsin in Buenos Aires, Menem confirmed the possibility of advancing the installation of his administration. According to AP, in the past week, several hundred stores and shops in more than a dozen cities have been sacked. More than 1,500 people have been arrested, two-thirds of them in Rosario. [Basic data from various reports by ADYN (Argentine newspaper collective), AP, Notimex, AFP, DPA, 05/30-31/89]

-- End --