

# Argentina missing: Omar Graffigna, ex-Air Force chief, goes on trial

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**The former head of the Argentine Air Force, Brigadier Omar Graffigna, has gone on trial in Buenos Aires province accused of forced disappearances during military rule from 1976 to 1983.**

Mr Graffigna, 90, is a suspect in the 1978 abduction of left-wing activists Patricia Roisinblit and her husband, Jose Manuel Perez Rojo.

He has denied any wrongdoing.

Human rights groups say about 30,000 people were forcibly disappeared under Argentina's military rule.

## Stolen baby

Patricia Roisinblit was eight months pregnant when she was taken along with her partner and 15-month-old daughter Mariana to the Regional Intelligence Centre of Buenos Aires (Riba), which was under the control of the Argentine Air Force.

From there, she was transferred to the infamous Navy Mechanics School.

The school, known as Esma, was the largest clandestine detention and torture centre in Buenos Aires.

## Argentina's military rule

**1976:** General Jorge Videla seizes power. Thousands of political opponents are rounded up and killed

**1982:** Videla's successor, General Leopoldo Galtieri, orders the invasion of British-held Falkland Islands

**1983:** Civilian rule returns to Argentina, investigations into rights abuses begin

**2010:** Videla sentenced to life imprisonment for murders during his term in office

**2012:** Videla sentenced to 50 years for overseeing systematic theft of the babies of political prisoners

Mariana was released shortly afterwards but her parents are believed to have been killed in detention.



Ms Roisinblit was kept alive long enough to give birth to her son.

The son, who was given the name of Guillermo, was given to an employee of the Regional Intelligence Centre to bring up, a common practice during Argentina's "dirty war" on left-wing activists.

Guillermo was tracked down in 2000 by his sister Mariana, who suspected he may be her long-lost brother.

## 'Death threat'

According to Guillermo, the man who raised him, Francisco Gomez, threatened "to put a bullet in the heads" of him, his sister Mariana and their grandmothers.

Gomez is on trial along with Mr Graffigna and the former head of Riba, Luis Trillo, over the disappearance of Guillermo's parents.

Mr Gomez is already in jail for stealing Guillermo from his parents.



Guillermo's grandmother, Rosa Roisinblit, is the vice-president of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a pressure group which seeks to trace the babies stolen by the military regime.

Ms Roisinblit, who is 96, attended the opening of the trial on Monday along with Guillermo.

She is expected to give evidence on Wednesday along with her granddaughter Mariana.

The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo have re-united 119 stolen children with their birth families.

They believe about 500 babies were stolen during military rule.

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