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Argentina Amends its Immigration Law, Speeds Up Deportations

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Argentina made a major change to its immigration law Monday. The change makes it easier to expel foreigners who do crimes or who are under investigation.

President Mauricio Macri ordered the change to the 2003 immigration law.

The presidential order notes a rise in organized crime by foreigners. It prevents entrance to immigrants who are serving sentences or have criminal records. It also speeds up expulsion for those who do crimes, including selling drugs and weapons or hiding illegal money.

The government said officials had faced administrative barriers in expelling foreigners who did such crimes.

The new law is designed to lower a sharp increase in crime. The issue is a top concern among Argentines who will vote in congressional elections later this year.

Foreigners represent 4.5 percent of the 40 million people living in Argentina. Human rights activists said the changed law could cause Argentines to wrongly judge that part of the population.

The group Amnesty International said it is a mistake to think of the **migration** crisis as just an issue of national security, and to link immigrants with criminals.

The human rights group said a country cannot violate its constitution and international human rights treaties to make new immigration policies.

Amnesty said the changes reduce guarantees of lawful processes and violate immigrant rights to fair protection.

Argentine Vice President Gabriela Michetti defended the new measure.

She told a local radio station that "Argentina is an open country that will always be in favor of **diversity**." She also rejected suggestions that the new law is like an immigration order signed last month by Donald Trump, the new president of the United States.

Argentine activist Adolfo Perez Esquivel said President Macri is "criminalizing immigration through executive orders" that change national laws and international commitments.

Esquivel won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for his defense of human rights during Argentina's "**dirty war**."

He said Argentine officials clearly violated human rights in the name of security when they made the law without involving lawmakers.

In his words, "security problems can and should be solved respecting our constitution and increasing our rights, not reducing them."

I'm Alice Bryant.

The Associated Press reported this story. Alice Bryant adapted it for Learning English. Caty Weaver was the editor.

We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments Section.

Words in This Story

migration - *n.* to move from one country or place to live or work in another

diversity - *n.* the state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures

dirty war - *n.* a period (1976-1983) when Argentina's military-led government hunted down and killed opponents
