

# French PM honors slain nuns in Argentina

The Miami Herald  
Dec. 09, 2007

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina --

France's prime minister paid tribute Saturday to two French nuns abducted and killed during Argentina's military dictatorship 30 years ago.

Prime Minister Francois Fillon laid red roses on the grave of Leonie Duquet in the garden of a Roman Catholic church, pausing to reflect before her black granite tombstone.

Duquet was abducted on Dec. 8, 1977, in what lawyers say was a commando-style operation by state security agents. The other French nun, Alice Domon, was also abducted that month, but her remains were never recovered.

Lawyers for the nuns said they were killed after befriending mothers of detained dissidents who were among the first victims of a crackdown on dissent against the 1976-83 dictatorship.

In 1999, a French court convicted a former Argentine naval officer in absentia in the abductions of the nuns and sentenced him to life in prison. The officer, Alfredo Astiz is being held in Argentina amid other court investigations into human rights abuses during the junta era.

Nearly 13,000 people are officially listed as dead or missing from a "Dirty War" crackdown on dissent during military rule, while activists put the toll closer to 30,000.

Fillon flew to Argentina for the inauguration of President-elect Cristina Fernandez, who on Monday takes over from husband Nestor Kirchner.