



Written by [Steve Bonta](#) on December 7, 2022

Argentina Sentences Leftist Vice President and Former President to Prison

Argentina is proof that political miracles occasionally happen.

Yesterday Argentina's sitting vice president and former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was convicted by an Argentine court of corruption related to crimes committed during her tenure as Argentina's president and sentenced to six years in prison. Fernández de Kirchner was also disqualified by the court from ever holding public office again. Because of immunity that she enjoys by virtue of holding office, Fernández de Kirchner will not have to report to prison pending the inevitable appeals. But she has already announced — after proclaiming her innocence — that she will not be running for any office in next year's national elections. After a long run as de facto elected left-wing dictator (and prior to that, wife of the late Nestor Kirchner, who preceded her as Argentina's president), before being temporarily ousted from power by center-right Mauricio Macri, Fernández de Kirchner's ruinous political career finally appears to be over.



AP Images
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner

Kirchner's legal woes are not novel. In an episode that rocked the nation to its core, Fernández de Kirchner was accused in 2015 by courageous Argentine federal prosecutor Alberto Nisman of covering up Iran's role in the horrific AMIA bombing in 1994. The terrorist attack, Argentina's worst ever, was carried out by a suicide bomber, who drove an explosives-laden van into Buenos Aires' Argentina Israelite Mutual Association building, killing 86 people and injuring more than 300 more. Argentina, be it noted, has the world's sixth-largest Jewish population, making it a target-rich environment for radical Islamic terror.

To this day, no one has been arrested in connection with this notorious event — perhaps because Alberto Nisman, hours before he was to testify against Fernández de Kirchner, was brutally murdered. Originally ruled a self-inflicted gunshot wound, albeit with a handgun that did not belong to him, Nisman's death was declared a homicide in 2017. Shortly after that, a judge indicted Cristina Fernández de Kirchner for treason, alleging that she was part of a conspiracy to cover up Iran's role in the AMIA bombing in order not to lose lucrative sweetheart deals with Iran. In 2018, plans were announced to put Fernández de Kirchner on trial. But displaying a Clintonesque ability to evade the claims of justice, she was exonerated in 2021 when a federal court unexpectedly nullified the case.



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But entanglement with terrorism and assassination were far from Fernández de Kirchner's only crimes. During her and her husband's terms in office, the floodgates to drug smuggling were opened, and Argentina experienced a horrific surge in crime and drug addiction. Her government aligned itself firmly with Marxist regimes such as Venezuela, which repaid the favor by lavishing her electoral campaigns with foreign money. On one occasion, a Venezuelan-American businessman was detained at Buenos Aires' international airport with a suitcase full of \$800,000 — a campaign gift from the Venezuelan government. Fernández de Kirchner also lobbied to get Marxist Venezuela admitted to Mercosur, South America's common market, above the objections of staunchly anti-communist Paraguay.

As for actual policymaking, the Kirchners were both Peronists, natural allies of communists and socialists everywhere, and arch-foes of free markets and individual liberty. Fernández de Kirchner imposed steep new taxes on agricultural exploits, triggering a national resistance movement in Argentina's huge agricultural sector. In addition, her administration nationalized private pension funds in 2008, a move that amounted to outright theft of \$30 billion in private funds. As Argentina spiraled deeper into insolvency and financial crisis, Fernández de Kirchner responded by devaluing the peso in 2014 and then defaulting on foreign debt obligations. For none of this did she ever take responsibility, blaming venal "vulture capitalists" abroad for Argentina's predicament. Enraged that Argentines continued to protect their hard-earned savings by converting it to U.S. dollars, she imposed strict currency controls, enforced by draconian punishments, which forbade Argentines from acquiring foreign credit cards or getting more than a very small amount of American dollars each month — measures that remain in place under Argentina's current administration, and which have given rise to a vast "blue" market in U.S. dollars.

In foreign policy, Fernández de Kirchner aligned Argentina with Marxist regimes in Latin America and elsewhere, while snubbing the United States and blaming it for Argentina's 2014 default. During her administration, some items were seized by Argentine officials from an American military transport plane that had come to the country for joint training. The episode prompted a diplomatic spat between the United States and Argentina that Fernández de Kirchner did nothing to allay.

In September of this year, Fernández de Kirchner survived a point-blank assassination attempt when a gunman stepped out of a crowd and tried repeatedly to fire at her head with a pistol, only to have the weapon misfire.

The saga of Fernández de Kirchner's downfall is not over; she has vowed to fight the corruption conviction, and perhaps is plotting to emulate fellow leftist and Brazilian president-elect's phoenix-like rise from the political ashes of felony convictions and imprisonment. But for now, at least, Argentina's judicial system has furnished the rest of the free world with a salutary example of the overthrow of an entrenched populist left-wing despot. Perhaps even Hillary Clinton — who is an acquaintance of Fernández de Kirchner — has been given pause for thought.



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