

## Welcome Comments

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*"There cannot be a mantle of oblivion. No society can start a new stage on an ethical claudication like"* – Raúl Alfonsín<sup>1</sup>

It is a matter of pride for the Argentine Foreign Affairs Ministry and especially for the National Foreign Service under my direction, to give you a very warm welcome and to be able to host the 33<sup>rd</sup> *Course on International Law and Legal Information* organized by the prestigious International Association of Law Libraries (IALL).

There were various venues chosen from the first meeting in Luxembourg in 1966, and there were varied topics developed in each of them. For the first time the annual IALL Meeting takes place in a South American country and for the second time the core theme is Human Rights.

This past September 20<sup>th</sup> was the thirtieth anniversary of the launch of the CONADEP report. On that occasion, the writer Ernesto Sabato (1911-2011) gave to Dr. Raúl Alfonsín (1927-2009) the report whose title is better known as *Never Again*. This book is now the symbol of the struggle for human rights where the abuses and violations experienced during the aberrant dictatorship between 1976 and 1983 are detailed.

The CONADEP was created by Decree 187 of December 15, 1983. Its members were:

- Ernesto Sabato (President of the Commission, writer and physicist),
- Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú (a journalist),
- Ricardo Colombres (a lawyer),

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\* © 2015 Juan Carlos Valle Raleigh. The author is an Ambassador of the Argentine Republic and the current Director of the Instituto del Servicio Exterior de la Nación (ISEN). He studied Political Science at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA) and served as Argentina's Ambassador to Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Libia. Prior to being appointed Director of the ISEN, Valle Raleigh was Alternate Representative of Argentina to the Organization of American States (OAS).

<sup>1</sup> Alfonsín is a former Argentinian President. He was in office when CONADEP was created. CONADEP means Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons).

- René Favaloro (a medical doctor, resigned),
- Hilario Fernández Long (an engineer, former dean of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Buenos Aires),
- Carlos Gattinoti (Argentinean bishop of the Methodist Church),
- Gregorio Klimovsky (an epistemologist),
- Graciela Fernandez Meijide (a politician, Secretary of the Commission),
- Marshall Meyer (a Rabbi, founder of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary),
- Jaime F. Nevares (a bishop of the province of Neuquén) and
- Eduardo Rabossi (a philosopher).

The CONADEP's report—about 50,000 pages—records 7380 files of allegations of aberrant acts such as the disappearance of 8960 people, torture, rape, appropriation of babies born in captivity; the organization and implementation of 340 clandestine detention centers, and minute details of the methods of State repression. According to the Prosecutor in the Trial of the military junta, Dr. Julio César Strassera, the preface of the report was the basis of his accusation: he succeeded in assembling test cases and formulated the charges of genocide from 700 witnesses. I should emphasize that in those days the Foreign Ministry had opened offices in diplomatic missions abroad to receive complaints.

It was not easy for those people who worked on the Commission to hear and transcribe the stories of the victims; however, the results were really fast. The book, *NEVER AGAIN*, was a perfect democratic birth since it was launched nine months after the installation of Dr. Alfonsín as President.

The CONADEP report proposed some recommendations to the government in order to repair and ultimately prevent the recurrence of violations of human rights:

- Continued research in the field of justice
- Financial assistance, scholarships and work for relatives of missing persons
- To declare as "crime against humanity" the forced disappearance of persons
- Compulsory education of human rights in schools (both civilian and military)
- Supporting human rights' organizations
- Repeal of repressive legislation

By Law 25.633 of August 2, 2002 the National Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice was created in order to remember and honor the victims. It

is celebrated every year on March 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>2</sup> Three years later, President Nestor Kirchner (1950-2010) decreed that the day was a national holiday.

Most of the recommendations suggested by the report of the CONADEP were implemented and were the foundation for what our country today has set as a Human Rights State Policy based on four pillars: Memory, Truth, Justice and Reparation. This is the way to respond to oblivion, lies, neglect and the injustice of acts against human rights.

The Public Policy Institute of Human Rights of MERCOSUR began to operate in 2011. Its primary purpose is to share best practices on the subject of Human Rights at the regional level.

The Latin American Network for the Prevention of Genocide with the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation was launched in 2012. Unique in the world, its mission is to develop the concept of education in the prevention of genocide and other atrocities in the framework of a regional agenda.

We can proudly say then, that Argentine government policy on the eradication of impunity for crimes against humanity during the military dictatorship is forming a strong legal framework to protect citizens and move toward a path of justice and equality. Hundreds of cases were reopened and 378 convictions were implemented since 2005. Other issues such as social inclusion, migration, and anti-discrimination are further proof of it.

I'm sure that the guest speakers—which I detail below—will have a wonderful opportunity to thoroughly explain the meaning of the struggle for human rights in Argentina in its multiple dimensions. Here is the list of speakers and their topics:

1. Introduction to Argentine legal system (Lucas Grosman, Dean of the University of San Andrés)
2. The fight against domestic violence. (Elena Highton de Nolasco, Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation)
3. Gender stereotypes in judicial decisions (Natalia Gherardi, Director of ELA, Latin American Justice and Gender)
4. Reproductive Rights (Paola Bergallo, adviser on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights)
5. International Law impact in domestic trials. (Agostina Allori, Secretary of Assistance and International Cooperation Ministry of Public Prosecutor)
6. MERCOSUR-UNASUR: Argentine cooperation in regional and international framework (Dario Celaya, diplomat, Principal at the Mercosur area, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

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<sup>2</sup> The date of the coup of 1976.

7. Fight for Human Rights (Federico Villegas Beltrán, diplomat, Principal at the Human Rights Area, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dr. Victor Abramovich (Executive Secretary of the Public Policy Institute of Human Rights in the MERCOSUR)
8. Librarians and libraries under state terrorism (Alejandra Nardi, Director of the School of Library Science, National University of Córdoba)
9. Libraries and military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983 (Federico Zeballos, School of Library Science, National University of Córdoba)
10. Banned Books: Never again! (María de los Angeles Jaimes Rondine, School of Library Science, National University of Córdoba)
11. Guided tour to the Memory and Human Rights Space, former ESMA<sup>3</sup>.

You are very welcome, enjoy not only the conference but also our city: Buenos Aires has many rewarding cultural facets. I now give the floor to Dr. Jeroen Vervliet, President of IALL.

Thank you very much.

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<sup>3</sup> Visitors will probably experience overwhelming and hopeful feelings at the same time. The sinister place of detention and death has become a place of collective memory to remember forever what should not be repeated again. Mrs. María Teresa Piñero, from the Area of Human Rights will lead together with Mrs. Hilda Micucci direct witness to these disappearances: two children, a girl and a boy. The daughter was a librarian. Visitors will hear the story of the former Esma, the horrors there during the military dictatorship and the government's decision to convert this area into one of permanent memory for such aberrations will not be forgotten and will never be repeated. It will be another opportunity to pay tribute to those victims.