

**MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER**  
**Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defense of Human Rights (CDA)**  
**“Archives of Terror”**  
(Paraguay)

*Ref N° 2008-51*

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**PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

**I SUMMARY**

One of the most relevant events of the Paraguayan democratic transition took place on December 23rd and 24th of 1992. On those key dates, judges Dr. José Agustín Fernández and Dr. Luís María Benítez Riera carried out a search and seizure proceeding at the Production Department of the Police Head Quarters in Asuncion and the Technical Section of the Ministry of the Interior. This important event was possible as a result of many years of extensive research conducted by the human rights defender Mr. Martin Almada to find the archives. When Mr. Almada had sufficient reliable evidence about the location of the archives, he presented all the data collected to the judges and requested that a search and seizure procedure be carried out immediately.

Official documents dating from 1927 to February 1989 were found in that search. Those documents comprise i) probatory elements for the trials in process and investigations of Human Rights violations (torture, forced disappearance of persons, exchange with foreign countries of arrested people without court order) and, ii) common property of immense historical value that helps maintain the collective memory alive, in order to defend the values of democracy, liberty and human rights. Since their discovery, these documents were named, the "Archives of Terror". The Archives of Terror are official documents of police repression during the thirty-five years of Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship. They demonstrate the systematic repression and gross violation of human rights of the regime. The Archives of Terror also contain supporting evidence of Operation Condor.

The Archives of Terror provide concrete evidence that allow people to investigate, analyze and reach a better understanding of how Stroessner's authoritarian regime damaged societal values, culture, social behavior and human relations. The Archives also demonstrate how the regime of terror imprisoned people arbitrarily, paralyzed justice and caused Paraguayan citizens to emigrate en masse. In addition, the Archives provide evidence that physical and mental torture became a systematic procedure employed by the regime to repress people with incompatible political ideas and beliefs.

The establishment of the Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defense of Human Rights (CDyA or the Center) in 1993 was an important step to systematize and to apply measures and methods for the preservation of the Archives of Terror. The digitization of the web site of this Center was carried out with the technical support of UNESCO. Ten years later, the Truth and Justice Commission was established by law with important participation from non governmental organizations. The Truth and Justice Commission has the mandate of elaborating a complete report about gross violations of human rights committed by state agents during the Stroessner dictatorship (1954 - 1989) and during the democratic transition, from 1989 until 2003. Without any doubt, the Archives of Terror are an invaluable resource for the work that the Truth and Justice Commission does. In 2005 the Museum of Memory was created. It is located in the Technical Section of the Ministry of the Interior, which is one of the buildings where thousands of people were tortured and murdered.

In conclusion, both State institutions and non-governmental organizations in Paraguay have made and continue to make important progress to preserve the collective memory of this horrific period in the country's contemporary history. The Judiciary and Executive branches of the Paraguayan government aim to raise awareness among citizens about how democratic values and promoting and defending human rights, are mutually supportive concepts. Neither can exist without the other. With the goal of strengthening the Nation, the Executive and Judiciary branches of the Paraguayan government have

acknowledged the brutal injustices committed under Stroessner's dictatorship by making these official documents available to the public. Only by empowering ourselves with the truth of the past can we prevent future injustices from occurring. It is absolutely imperative to properly preserve each of the individual items found in the Archives of Terror to document this period of history.

## **2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR**

### **2.1 Name (organization)**

Supreme Court of Justice of the Republic of Paraguay

### **2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated**

The CDyA is under custody of the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ). On March 26, 1993, the SCJ resolved the creation of the CDyA and determined its location at the Palace of Justice, with free access to public and researchers.

### **2.3 Contact person (s)**

Prof. Dr. Luís María Benítez Riera, Director of the CDyA [luismariabenitezr@hotmail.com](mailto:luismariabenitezr@hotmail.com)  
Ms. Rosa Palau, Director of the CDyA [rpalauaguilar@gmail.com](mailto:rpalauaguilar@gmail.com) [rosa\\_palau@hotmail.com](mailto:rosa_palau@hotmail.com)

### **2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)**

Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defence of Human Rights (CDyA),  
PALACE OF JUSTICE  
Testanova y Mariano Roque Alonso  
Asunción-Paraguay  
Tel: 595-21-424212/15,  
e-mail: [cdya@pj.gov.py](mailto:cdya@pj.gov.py)  
<http://www.pj.gov.py/cdya>

## **3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE**

### **3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated**

Archives of Terror

The CDyA was created on March 26, 1993 by Resolution N° 81 of the Supreme Court of Justice. Since April 24, 2007 it is part of the Museum of Justice, by Resolution N° 1097. At present, the Center is located on the ground floor of the Palace of Justice. The CDyA, counts with approximately 200 lineal meters of documents, in addition to nearly 20,000 photographs and 543 audio cassettes.

There are approximately 800,000 pages of information in the CDyA. They include:

- 600 books bound and classified with an alphanumerical system. The identifying letters had their own meaning and resemble the wide scope of the organizations and sectors that were under surveillance by the repression agents.
  - A: entry and going out of arrested persons
  - D: Letters to the Head of Investigations.
  - E: Confidential reports.
  - F: Reports on opponents' domicile surveillance.
  - H. Administrative dispositions
  - J: Service notes of the staff.
  - L: Prisoners' signed declarations

N: List of imprisoned persons in quarters.  
 P: Political parties Control  
 Q: Students Centers Control  
 S: Periodical publications  
 W: Reports on subversive groups  
 Z: Unions Control.

- 115 Guard News Books from the Direction of Politics and the like of the Direction of Surveillance and Offences. They comprise daily reports of the guard of the Investigations Bureau and show details of the events occurred every day in those facilities. The Entry and Going Out of arrested people have an alphabetical index, which facilitates searches.
- 181 files and 204 cardboard containers in which are groups of reports and documents of varied origins.
- 574 folders containing information relating to political parties, unions, maps, surveillance to persons and entities, etc.
- 11,225 filing or index cards of arrested persons by the Bureau of Investigations, Technical Section and Judicial Department. There are also index cards with references of persons who had not been arrested but that, for some reason, were considered suspects by the Police. They contain data on the person, which were updated as regards domicile, labour activity, leavings of the country, etc. Once the suspect was arrested, there was enough advanced work.
- 1,888 identity cards and passports (most of them found underground in the same location where the files were found).
- About 20,000 photographs of arrested people, political meetings, social events and family photo albums confiscated during search and seizures.
- The books confiscated from the arrested people made possible the creation of a library of nearly 1,500 books, which are at the CDyA. Among them there are political texts (mostly texts with leftist ideology); history and sociology, but there are also trigonometry and natural sciences books.
- 543 cassettes with recorded political meetings and panels, conferences, homilies, speeches and radio programs.
- Documents dating from years prior 1954 (year of Alfredo Stroessner's takeover), which were grouped under the title "Pre-Stroessner File". This file contained documents from the 1930s and 1940s. The file is comprised of 28 books with records of names, police résumés, workers leader's lists, police entries, etc. and nearly 4,000 index card records.

### 3.2 Description

One of the most relevant events of the Paraguayan transition process took place on December 23 and 24, 1992. On those key dates, judges Dr. José Agustín Fernández and Dr. Luís María Benítez Riera carried out a search and seizure proceeding at the Production Department of the Police Station and the Technical Section of the Ministry of the Interior.

Documents dating from 1927 to February 1989 were found in that search. Those documents comprise i) probatory elements for the trials in process and investigations of Human Rights violations (torture, forced disappearance of persons, exchange with foreign countries of arrested people without court order) and, ii) common property of immense historical value that help maintain the collective memory alive, in order to defend the values of democracy, liberty and human rights. Since their discovery, these documents were named, the "Archives of Terror".

The importance of the discovery is that the documents that were found demonstrate the systematic repression and gross violation of human rights of Stroessner's regime. The Archives of Terror also contain supporting evidence of Operation Condor.

Before the days of the discovery, a rumour was spread through the radio stations in Asunción. Archives from the dictatorship were found in a dark police station in Lambaré, a neighbouring city to the Capital. Within a short period of time, a crowd of people and journalists gathered outside the police station where they witnessed an unprecedented event.

The Judge of the Third Shift in Criminal Matters, Dr. José Agustín Fernández entered into the police headquarters with a search warrant and demanded that a specific door be unlocked for investigation. This procedure took place within the framework of the case **“Martín Almada s/Hábeas Data”**. In this case the judge received an accusation reporting that these archives were being stored in the Productions Department of the Police facilities located in Lambaré. On the judge’s request, Almada stated that the information was entrusted to him by a policeman’s wife, whose name has been kept totally in secret.

As clear evidence that things had changed in Paraguay, the officials on duty permitted Judge Fernández to access the facilities. He requested the presence of the Judge of the Second Shift in Criminal Matters, Dr. Luís María Benítez Riera, who was on duty at that day. In addition under his jurisdiction was the trial **“Pastor Coronel, Juan Martínez, Lucilo Benítez y Camilo Almada Morel s/Muerte y Torturas. Capital”**, also known as the Schaerer Prono case. When the Archives were found, this case against Pastor Coronel and the others had a verdict of guilty in the first instance. (Final Judgement N° 25 of May 21, 1992).

Two days after these files were found, on December 24, 1992, Judge Dr. Luís María Benítez Riera ordered the search and seizure of the emblematic building of the repression called National Direction of Technical Matters (DNAT). The DNAT was a branch of the Ministry of the Interior. This judicial proceeding was executed under the investigation in the trial: **“Antonio Campos Alum y Nei (o Nery) Saldívar a/Frustrated Homicide, Body Injury and Others. Capital City”**.

The DNAT was created by a Ministry resolution in 1957. It specialized in the repression of communism, whose long time Director was Antonio Campos Alum, a well known reference from the World Anti-Communist League. Notably, in his own desk, the personal documents of Derlis Villagra (one of the disappeared people during the dictatorship) were found. The documents confiscated from that place were incorporated to the “Archives of Terror” in January 1993.

The classification process of the Archives started in early 1993. The Supreme Court of Justice and the District Attorney’s Office of the State instructed the officers to collaborate with the professional staff specialized in documentations. These specialists were provided by two non-governmental organizations, the Center of Documentation and Studies (CDE) and the Churches Committee for Emergency Assistance (CIPAE). These two NGO’s also represented victims and victims’ families of the dictatorship.

In March of 1993, the Supreme Court of Justice created the Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defense of Human Rights (CDyA), which is located in the Palace of Justice. This Center is open to public and researchers. The Center now has microfilm and a digitized system in order to protect the documents. These improvements were made possible by their own resources and with the important cooperation of national and international organizations, universities and other public and private institutions.

The Archives contain a wide variety of types of documents. Some examples that confirm the systematic and detailed surveillance that the police under the dictatorship maintained about the citizens are: I) reports on people attending family gatherings, II) license plate numbers of the cars that were parked in the surrounding areas of meetings, III) detailed controls of people who entered and left the country through the border posts, IV) lists of “confidential agents”, and even V) lists of people invited to wedding ceremonies of the families opposing the dictatorship and attendees at the wakes of a dissident leaders.

The CDyA has served and continues to serve a very important purpose for both criminal investigations and for research. As a primary source of data, the Archives have provided important information to students and researchers, both national and international. Based on the information that they have found, they have published titles that confirm local and regional events. Although many of these events were known to be true, the academic works produced based on the primary data sources served

as unquestionable documentary evidence about a long period in history under the regime of terror. Out of the numerous titles, we select:

### **Bibliography:**

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- ES MI INFORME. LOS ARCHIVOS SECRETOS DE LA POLICIA DE STROESSNER (Quinta Edición) Boccia Paz, Alfredo, González, Myrian y Palau, Rosa. Centro de Documentación y Estudios / Servilibro, Asunción, 2006.
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- LA DECADA INCONCLUSA, historia real de la OPM. Boccia Paz, Alfredo. Asunción, 1997.
- LOS SUCEOS DE CAAGUAZU. Paredes, Roberto. Asunción, 2000.
- TESTIMONIO CONTRA EL OLVIDO. Reseña de la infamia y el terror (Paraguay 1954-1989). Asunción: Corte Suprema de Justicia; CIPAE, 1998.
- HIJO DE HOMBRE. Roa Bastos Augusto. Buenos Aires, 1960.
- LOS EXILIADOS. Gabriel Casaccia.
- OJO POR DIENTE. Rubén Bareiro Saguier. Caracas. 1972
- CELDA 12. Moncho Azuaga

Since the discovery of the Archives, numerous people, institutions and local non-governmental institutions have collaborated to strengthen the CDA. Among others, the **COMMITTEE OF ASSISTANCE FOR EMERGENCIES (CIPAE) and CENTER OF DOCUMENTATION AND STUDIES** have participated in this process. At the international level, we mention Mr. Carlos Osorio, representative of the non-governmental organization **NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE (NSA)**, from Washington, D.C., USA, and Mrs. Inmaculada Moratalia and Mr. Vincent Gil, members of the **ARCHIVO SIN FRONTERAS**, from Spain.

## **4. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

### **4.1 Authenticity**

There is absolutely no doubt that these archives are authentic. They are largely made up of materials produced by the Paraguayan Police force under Stroessner's regime. Many of the documents are

administrative files, generated by the police internal bureaucracy. The most valuable part of these documents are the reports, filing or index cards, intelligence studies, arrested people lists, internal books relating to the social and political repression, and evaluation studies filed by the heads of the Investigations Bureau during more than forty years.

Undoubtedly, one of the most impressive aspects of the Archives was the obsession for filing everything, meticulously, and, if possible in duplicate, by the sempiternal head of the Bureau, Mr. Pastor Coronel. In addition, the files comprise a section of materials confiscated by the Police in search and seizures: personal letters, political literature, photographs, pamphlets, books, newspaper clippings, etc. There is not in any other place in Paraguay with such complete collections of confiscated items.

#### **4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability**

The nominated documentary components are unique, singular and absolutely irreplaceable. The components of the Archives are informative, have proof value and their testimonial character illustrate the systematic and widespread repression, torture, murder and forced disappearance by Stroessner's regime (1954 – 1989). Equally important, it demonstrates the activities of resistance, struggle, and the fight for truth and justice during that period of contemporary Paraguayan history.

The Archives of Terror are official documents of police repression during the thirty-five years of Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship. They also contain supporting evidence of Operation Condor activities as a part of a campaign of political repressions involving assassination and intelligence operations. It was officially implemented in 1975 by the right-wing dictators of the Southern Cone of South America. The "Archives" achieved two major purposes. First it led the national and international community to find evidence and proof against repressors. Second, it helped family members and others to discover more about what happened to lost, arrested or tortured victims. The CDyA is an inexhaustible source of testimonies from a long period of systematic gross human rights violations.

Since its discovery in December 1992, the Archives of Terror have become a leading source of evidence for international human rights proceedings in courts across the world, as Paraguayan researchers such as Alfredo Boccia Paz, Rosa Palau and Miriam Gonzalez have worked tirelessly to locate and provide documents to lawyers and judges in countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay.

During their recent visit to the CDyA, the President of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, Florentín Meléndez said, "We acknowledge the "Archives of Terror" as Historical Patrimony of Humanity, to preserve, forever, the signs of events that must never happen again in Latin America". The Commissioner, Victor Abromovich, said "We value the effort to preserve the historical memory as antidote against authoritarianism". The Executive Secretary of the ICHR, Santiago Canto said, "We congratulate this outstanding work, preserving the memory of terror as the best bridge to a future free of violence."

#### **4.3 Criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (f) social, spiritual and community significance satisfied**

##### **a. Time:**

This is a complete record of more than thirty-five years of dictatorship (Alfredo Stroessner's regime - 1954-1989), covering the Cold War period and its impact on the Latin American continent.

##### **b. Place**

Paraguay

### **c. People**

These Archives contain 1,888 identity cards and passports. Most of them were found under ground in the same location where the Archives were found. It also contains about 20.000 photographs of arrested people, political meetings, social events and family photo albums confiscated during search and seizures. It also contains 11,225 filing or index cards of arrested persons by the Bureau of Investigations, Technical Section and Judicial Department. There are also index cards with references of people who had not been arrested but that, for some reason, were considered suspects by the Police. The data includes information about domicile, labour activity, leavings of the country, etc.

### **d. Subject and theme**

In this dark chapter of history, systematic and widespread repression, torture, murder and forced disappearance by Stroessner's regime (1954 – 1989) occurred. In response to this oppressive system, there were activities of resistance and struggle. There were people who fought for truth and justice during that period.

The Archives of Terror provide concrete evidence that allow people to investigate, analyze and reach a better understanding of how Stroessner's authoritarian regime damaged societal values, culture, social behaviour and human relations. The Archives also demonstrate how the regime of terror imprisoned people arbitrarily, paralyzed justice and caused Paraguayan citizens to emigrate en masse.

In addition, the Archives provide evidence that physical and mental torture became a systematic procedure employed by the regime to repress people with incompatible political ideas and beliefs. Hundreds of Paraguayans and citizens from other countries were victims of Stroessner's regime and/or the Operation Condor. These Archives made it possible to prosecute repressors and State agents involved in gross human rights violations.

### **f. Social, spiritual and community significance**

The Archives have become a symbol. In Paraguay, the word memory is unfailingly related to these Archives. The day the Archives were discovered people spontaneously helped passing thousands of documents, from hand to hand demonstrating their solidarity and their desire to help uncover the truth. The police books placed in an orderly fashion on the shelves of the CDyA become an icon, represent the beginning of a new era.

The dark years of dictatorship were a terrible tragedy, and the memory of that horror must be kept alive if we are to prevent history from repeating itself. This is especially true since Paraguay is country with a young population. With a high birth rate -87% of the population is under 27 years old- it is important that Paraguay's young citizens be taught about this tumultuous time so that the historical memory remains alive.

Representatives of the CDyA have actively collaborated in the organization of the Work Sessions of "Reflection about Historical Memory and Files of the Repression" in October, 2002, which ended with the creation and installation of the Truth and Justice Committee and the Museum of the Memories in the location of the Technical Section of the Ministry of the Interior.

## **4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management**

### **Rarity**

The nominated documentary components are unique, singular and absolutely irreplaceable. The components of the Archives are informative, have proof value and their testimonial character illustrate the systematic and widespread repression, torture, murder and forced disappearance by Stroessner's regime (1954 – 1989).

## **Integrity**

The CDyA, counts with approximately 200 lineal meters of documents, in addition to nearly 20,000 photographs and 543 audio cassettes. Documents dating from 1927, but mostly from 1954 to February 1989 were found in that search. Those documents comprise i) probatory elements for the trials in process and investigations of Human Rights violations (torture, forced disappearance of persons, exchange with foreign countries of arrested people without court order) and, ii) common property of immense historical value that help maintain the collective memory alive, in order to defend the values of democracy, liberty and human rights.

## **Threat and management**

A management plan has been developed to ensure its long-term preservation. The support from international sources has been fundamental in achieving this goal.

### **5 LEGAL INFORMATION**

#### **5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)**

Supreme Court of Justice of the Republic of Paraguay  
The Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defence of Human Rights (CDyA),

PALACIO DE JUSTICIA  
Testanova y Mariano Roque Alonso  
Asunción-Paraguay  
Tel: 595-21-424212/15,  
e-mail: [cdya@pj.gov.py](mailto:cdya@pj.gov.py)  
<http://www.pj.gov.py/cdya>

#### **5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)**

The Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defence of Human Rights (CDyA),

#### **5.3 Legal status:**

##### **(a) Category of ownership**

Public property

##### **(b) Accessibility**

The Center is open to the public on week days from 7 am to 1 pm.

##### **(c) Copyright status**

Supreme Court of Justice of the Republic of Paraguay and the CDA

##### **(d) Responsible administration**

The Center of Documentation and Archives for the Defence of Human Rights (CDA)

### **6 MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### **6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage YES**



At present, the CDyA is processing the following activities: i) the signing of an Agreement with the Kansas State University, which will enable to continue with the cataloguing of the documentary fundamentals, in addition to updating the data processing equipment; ii) Extension of the Agreement signed by the National Security Archive (NSA), in order to organize and process the images recently digitized; to get financing for the maintenance of the internet connexion and, if possible, to install a new antenna connexion; iii) In order to give continuity to the support received from Archivists without Frontiers, a proposal was submitted for the conversion of audio cassettes to DVD formats, which will enable their conservation and availability for educational or research usage.

The following are in process: 1) digitization of photographs, financed by Archivists without Frontiers; ii) Putting online the catalogue of over 60,000 records of the Data Bases prepared during the Historical Memory project, Democracy and Human Rights with the National Security Archive; Linked to these Data Bases are the 1,150 images relating to the “Operation Condor”; the preparation and putting online of electronic personal columns are in charge of the National Security Archive with the support of the Gelman Library of the George Washington University.

The process of preservation and conservation of the original documents has been possible because of the projects previously mentioned. However, with the technological support currently available, the inquiries are made from computer screens, which avoid the need to take the original documents from the shelves. When copies are requested, they are directly printed from the network that is available at the CDyA, preventing the exposure of the papers to the photocopiers’ damaging light.

The CDyA, in addition, has a web site located at ([www.pj.gov.py/cdya](http://www.pj.gov.py/cdya)). On it is a Data Base with approximately 60,000 records available. Users in remote locations can search the online Data Base and later request the desired documentation from the Center via e-mail ([cdya@pj.gov.py](mailto:cdya@pj.gov.py)). The requests for documents are delivered promptly. This system of communication enables the Center to render a quick and efficient service to researchers anywhere in the world who are interested in events that have occurred in Latin America over the past fifty years.

In conclusion, we hereby certify that it is the second time that the Republic of Paraguay has requested the registration of the Archives of Terror at the Registry of the Memory Program of the World as a documentary Patrimony. As stated in the preceding paragraphs, the Archives have a great documentary and testimonial value. The Archives are immensely important for Paraguay and other Latin American countries affected by regimes of terror.

It is true that the citizens that have lived under authoritarian regime have endured unimaginable suffering. For that very reason, we must not allow that suffering to be forgotten. It is imperative to keep the memory alive in our people’s minds, transmitting it to the younger generations, so that it may never be repeated. We must not forget that *“a people that does not remember, is exposed to repeat the history”*.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### **7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional *Memory of the World* committee**

Consultations were carried out between the Supreme Court of Justice, the CDyA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Human Rights Direction and International Organizations Direction), with de participation of the UNESCO National Committee, in order to prepare this candidature.

Finally, advisory information was requested from the Memory of the World Programme at UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris, through the Permanent Delegation of Paraguay to the UNESCO.

## **PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

### **8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

8.1 In December 2007, with the availability of the new space, the documentation is protected with all safety measure, proper lightening, humidity control, fire preventive measures, and against eventual documents robbery.

## **9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

9.1 At present, the documentary background is microfilmed and digitized. Furthermore, there are data processing tools available which allow the quick and efficient location of the required documentation by the users attending the Center in search of information. Although the documentation is preserved in electronic format, so far the paper format has not received any treatment to preserve it and conserve it for the future. Around 60% of this documentation is duplicated (in carbon paper, photocopies, telefax) and manuscripts, which facilitates and hastens its deterioration.

### **PART C - LODGEMENT**

#### **This nomination is lodged by:**

Prof. Victor Nuñez, President of the Supreme Court of Justice

Prof. Dr. José Raul Torres Kirmser, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the Supreme Court of Justice

Dr. Luís Maria Benítez Riera, Director of CDyA

Lic. Rosa Palau, Director of CDyA