1. Summary

The Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past of the Office of the President of Uruguay house the documentary heritage comprised of the archival collections and materials related to the grave human rights violations perpetrated during the period of State terrorism in Uruguay, 1968-1985. This heritage is made up of documents of diverse provenance, primarily documents from the Public Archives, acquired through transfers, and produced by the repressive apparatus responsible for the joint actions carried out in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Brazil under the notorious “Condor Plan”. The documentary heritage includes testimonies, reports, photographs, court documents, press clippings, intelligence reports, and records of the detained-disappeared and victims of persecution, illegal detention and torture, as well as documents related to investigations into forced disappearances, political killings, and the theft of children born in captivity. These primary sources of information are fundamental to the search for truth and the construction of identity. Inclusion in the Memory of the World Register would contribute to the safeguarding, promotion, sustainability and knowledge of this valuable documentary heritage for future generations, and to ensuring that the grave human rights violations they document are never again repeated at any time or in any place.
2. Nominator

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

Secretaría de Derechos Humanos para el Pasado Reciente de la Presidencia de la República Oriental del Uruguay.

[Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past of the Office of the President of the Republic of Uruguay].

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage.

In the year 2000, during the administration of President Jorge Batlle, the Peace Commission (COMIPAZ) was established under Presidential Resolution Nº 858/000 of 9 August 2000 (see Annex 1 in Spanish). The original members of this Commission were Monseigneur Nicolás Cotugno, Father Luis Pérez Aguirre, José D’Elía, Dr. José C. Williman, Dr. Gonzalo Fernández and Dr. Carlos Ramela Regules. Following the death of Father Luis Pérez Aguirre, he was replaced in COMIPAZ by Father Jorge Osorio.

On 10 April 2003, the Final Report of the Peace Commission, defined by a presidential resolution as “the official version of the situation of the detained-disappeared”, was released. According to the report, the disappearance of 32 individuals in Uruguayan territory had been confirmed, as well as 125 disappearances in Argentina, 8 in Chile, 2 in Paraguay, 1 in Bolivia and 1 in Colombia.

On 11 April 2003, a Secretariat for Follow-up to the Peace Commission was established through Presidential Resolution N° 449/003 (see Annex 2 in Spanish) to perform administrative functions and to take up and continue any pending proceedings of the Peace Commission.

In 2005, teams of historians and anthropologists from the Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay (University of the Republic of Uruguay) began to investigate these disappearances under agreements signed with the Office of the President. By virtue of Presidential Resolution N° 812/007 of 17 December 2007 (see Annex 3 in Spanish), the membership of the Secretariat for Follow-up was expanded to include representatives of the teams of historians and anthropologists, as well as a representative of the Association of Mothers and Relatives of Detained-Disappeared Uruguayans.

Under Presidential Resolution N° 450/011 of 31 August 2011 (see Annex 4 in Spanish), adopted in the Council of Ministers, an Interministerial Commission was established.
and the functions of the Secretariat for Follow-up to COMIPAZ were broadened. An executive coordinating body was created, made up by a directorate and administrative secretariat, two representatives proposed by the University of the Republic (a historian and an anthropologist), a representative proposed by the Association of Mothers and Relatives of Detained-Disappeared Uruguayans, and a representative of the Public Prosecution Service (Ministerio Público y Fiscal). On 1 October 2011, the Secretariat was further expanded to include a professional team of archivists.

Finally, through Presidential Resolution N° 463/013 of 1 August 2013 (see Annex 5 in Spanish), the name of the Secretariat was changed to the “Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past” (SDDHHPR). In addition to this new name, the secretariat’s investigative responsibilities were also broadened, through the establishment of cooperation with a Special Unit created by the Ministry of the Interior to assist in legal proceedings at the request of judges and prosecutors.

2.3 Contact person(s).
Lic. Graciela Jorge, General Director, Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past of the Office of the President of the Republic of Uruguay.

2.4 Contact details.

Secretaría de Derechos Humanos para el Pasado Reciente.
[Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past].

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3. Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

The Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past comprise numerous collections and fonds made up of documents related to the detained-disappeared, victims of political killings, and victims of other human rights violations in Uruguay.
These documents can be organized as follows:

**PUBLIC ARCHIVES**

The Public Archives comprise documents that belong to and are managed by a public service or institution, and have been produced through the exercise of the functions of the public administration. In Uruguay, the State Archives comprise the Archives of the Legislative Branch and the General Assembly; the Archives of the Executive Branch, which include central government bodies, decentralized services, autonomous entities and public companies; and the Archives of the Judicial Branch. They also include the Archives of Departmental (Provincial) Governments.

Of particular relevance here are the documents belonging to repressive state bodies produced for the purpose of repression by police intelligence services, departmental governments and/or the penitentiary services operating during those years.

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

A) **COMIPAZ Fonds / Secretariat for Follow-up to COMIPAZ Fonds / Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past Fonds**:

- Certificate of absence due to forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original

- Report of forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Executive Branch files in response to the Judicial Branch under Law N° 15.848, arts. 1 and 3
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original

- General file on forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original

- Report from the Commanders in Chief at the request of President Tabaré Vázquez on Citizens Detained and Reported as Disappeared
Memory of the World Register 2014
Archivo de la Secretaría de Derechos Humanos para el Pasado Reciente de la Presidencia de la República Oriental del Uruguay

Format: Paper
Version: Original

- Final Report of COMIPAZ
  Format: Paper - Digital
  Version: Original

- Records on the Murdered and Deceased (LAF)
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original – Copy

- Records on the Detained-Disappeared (LDD)
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original – Copy

- Records on Children and Adolescents (LNA)
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original – Copy

- Press clippings
  Format: Paper - Digital
  Version: Copy

- Testimonies
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original – Copy

Team of Anthropologists:

- Documents from the archaeological investigation into the disappeared and murdered
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original

- Anthropometric data collection / Antemortem data collection
  Format: Paper
  Version: Original

Team of Archivists:
Memory of the World Register 2014
Archivo de la Secretaría de Derechos Humanos para el Pasado Reciente de la
Presidencia de la República Oriental del Uruguay

- Technical reports from the Team of Archivists
  Format: Paper - Digital
  Version: Original

Team of Historians:

- Personal records of the detained-disappeared
  Format: Paper - Digital
  Version: Original

- Technical reports from the Team of Historians
  Format: Paper - Digital
  Version: Original

- Historical research on the detained-disappeared
  Format: Paper - Digital
  Version: Original

B) Ministry of National Defence:

- Documents from the Coordinating Body of Anti-Subversive Operations
  (Organismo Coordinador de Operación Antisubversivas - OCOA)
  Format: Digital
  Version: Copy

- Documents from the Information and Defence Service (Servicio de Información
  y Defensa - SID)
  Format: Digital
  Version: Copy

C) Ministry of the Interior:

- Documents from the National Information and Intelligence Directorate
  (Dirección Nacional de Información e Inteligencia)
  Format: Digital
  Version: Copy

- General information criminal records
  Format: Paper
D) Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- Documents from the Uruguayan Embassy in Argentina
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

- Documents from the General Assembly
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Form for reporting a forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Information on forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

JUDICIAL BRANCH

- Documents from the Forensic Technical Institute
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

ARCHIVAL MATERIAL FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Documents from foreign institutions, both governmental and non-governmental.

A) Argentina

National Memory Archives. National Department for the Management of Documentary Collections. Unified Register of Victims of State Terrorism:

- Individual files of the disappeared
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy
National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas - CONADEP):

- Information available on forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Records of the detained-disappeared
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense - EAAF):

- Reports of disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Investigative reports
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. Secretariat of Human Rights:

- Records on the detained-disappeared
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

B) Brazil

Ministry of Justice:

- National Archives documents
  Format: Digital
  Version: Copy

C) Chile
National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación - CVR):

- Report on the disappeared
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

National Corporation for Reparations and Reconciliation (Corporación Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación - CNRR):

- Report on the classification of victims of human rights violations and political violence
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Resolution of the High Council of the Corporation
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Declaration as a victim of human rights violations
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

Archives of the Vicariate of Solidarity (Vicaría de la Solidaridad):

- Work documents
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

The private collections comprise documents from individuals and private entities, including relatives, associations, political parties, companies and churches, as well as civil society documents produced by human rights organizations and people in resistance to the military dictatorship, in their search for the victims of forced disappearances and for truth and justice.
A) Association of Mothers and Relatives of Detained-Disappeared Uruguayans (Asociación de Madres y Familiares de Uruguayos Detenidos Desaparecidos):

- General file on forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

B) Institute of Legal and Social Studies of Uruguay (Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay - IELSUR):

- Report of forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

- Form for reporting a forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

C) Peace and Justice Service (Servicio Paz y Justicia - SERPAJ):

- Form for reporting a forced disappearance
  Format: Paper
  Version: Copy

3.2 History/provenance

Historical background on the Uruguayan dictatorship

The coup d’état and dictatorship in Uruguay were phenomena that resulted not only in political and institutional rupture, but also a rupture in civilization, as the state seized the right to determine the life or death of its citizens, the freedom or imprisonment of individuals, and the subsequent cover-up or denial of its crimes.

As noted in the Final Report of the Peace Commission (2000-2003): “(…) it is always and in all cases the STATE that has the supreme obligation to defend certain values, to guarantee certain principles and to rule out certain procedures, using its authority and power in strict adherence to the law and to the basic rights of the human being. The STATE that abandons these premises and allows or tolerates the existence of a
repressive apparatus that acts without control and outside the rule of law distorts its essence and violates the basic principles that constitute the essence of its very existence.”

The “new style” dictatorships established between 1964 and 1976 in the Southern Cone region of Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina) were a regional phenomenon. As such, the majority of Uruguayans who were victims of forced disappearance were “disappeared” in Argentina. The region as a whole was the area of operations for the repressive actions coordinated by security forces in the framework of the so-called “Condor Plan”.

Introduction

The most openly repressive forms of the Uruguayan State took hold gradually, after successive escalations of institutional violence. These began before the coup, in confrontations with workers’ protests and the actions of armed groups, but took a turn towards the large-scale forced disappearance of persons near the end of 1975, a practice consolidated between 1976 and 1978 in the country and the region through “Operation Condor”.

Under the dictatorship, everyday forms of surveillance and control of society were implemented, and more specifically, repression of leftist political organizations (the illegalization of these organizations; the search for and interrogation and arrest of their leaders and members; confiscation of assets, premises and documents; prohibition of partisan press; monitoring and surveillance). Alongside these routine and ongoing forms of repression, various repressive operations were also executed.

The phenomenon of forced disappearance of persons was preceded by the phenomenon of the detention of these same persons in detention procedures that were unofficial or unrecognized by the Uruguayan State, carried out by members of military and/or police forces that acted publicly or covertly.

In the vast majority of cases, the disappearances took place in the framework of repressive operations against Uruguayan political parties and groups and their members, including those who for some time had been living abroad and coordinating actions against the dictatorship among themselves.

The “military era”: Main characteristics of the Uruguayan civilian-military dictatorship (1973-1985)

On 27 June 1973, “(...) forces from Military Region No. 1 occupied the Legislative Palace. Thus began a new and painful phase in the Uruguayan authoritarian process.
That same day, hundreds of thousands of workers, organized in the CNT [the national trade union confederation], declared a general strike for an indefinite period of time, as had been resolved in different workers’ congresses since 1964. (…) After two weeks, the strike was defeated.¹ This would be the beginning of 12 years of civilian-military dictatorship. That same 27 June 1973, when the government dissolved the parliament, the National Convention of Workers (CNT) declared a general strike, and together with the Federation of University Students of Uruguay (FEUU) occupied workplaces and study centres. The strike was finally lifted on 11 July following fierce debates within the trade union movement.

One of the processes that characterized the Uruguayan dictatorship – distinguishing it from the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina – was large-scale and prolonged imprisonment. More than 5,000 people were sentenced and sent to Uruguayan jails during the dictatorship in our country, in addition to a countless number who were detained without trial or were kidnapped and interrogated in clandestine detention centres, with no record of these events.

We should also take into account that between 1963 and 1985, it is estimated that approximately 380,000 people emigrated from the country.² Initially, most of these emigrants were motivated by reasons of political exile and headed primarily to Chile and Argentina, which were not only favoured because of their geographical proximity but also because they had supportive governments (led by Allende and Cámpora, respectively). After the coups in these two countries, the destination of political exiles changed to Europe, particularly Sweden, France and Spain.

In the meantime, the main targets of repressive operations were leftist parties and sectors, for the purpose of arresting and even killing the majority of their members. “Sometimes the operations were carried out over the course of several months, but generally they were executed in short periods of time. While the goal was to dismantle these organizations, in some cases the operations were carried out with the aim of completely eliminating them.”³

Within the country, the need to pursue political militancy in clandestinity in order to avoid repression made it difficult for groups to coordinate actions with others.

Beginning in September 1973, there was a marked militarization of the Uruguayan State, as numerous members of the military began to occupy important leadership positions in government bodies formerly headed by political leaders, and new state entities comprising both military members and civilians were created. In addition, on 19 November of that same year, the Council of State was established; it was made up of civilians designated directly by the president and was meant to take over the functions of the parliament.

In May 1976, the murdered corpses of former Uruguayan lawmakers Zelmar Michelini and Héctor Gutiérrez Ruiz were discovered in Argentina, alongside the bodies of former Tupamaro rebels Rosario Barredo and William Whitelaw. MLN rebels who remained active in the region also fell victim to the repressive operations of “Operation Condor”, together with militants from other organizations such as the Unified Action Groups (GAU), the Revolutionary Communist Party, and the Party for the People’s Victory, which had been formed in Argentina in 1975. All of these groups were harshly repressed in Buenos Aires, resulting in the forced disappearance of a total of 174 Uruguayan citizens in Argentina.

In August 1977, the Armed Forces informed the population of a proposed reform of the constitution, for the purpose of legitimizing the changes that had been made through institutional acts. A referendum on the matter was eventually held several years later, on 30 November 1980.

August 1978 was a key month for a number of reasons. National Party leaders Luis Alberto Lacalle, Carlos Julio Pereyra and Mario Heber were sent three bottles of wine as a gift, with the recommendation that they open them to drink a toast on 31 August. The three bottles contained a potent toxic pesticide, which caused the death of Cecilia Fontana, the wife of Mario Heber, on 5 September. Aparicio Méndez was supposed to be replaced as de facto president of the country on 31 August, and this would presumably be the reason for the toast. “Once again, as had already happened in May 1976 and perhaps before that, a ‘tactical assassination’ blocked an attempted rapprochement between the military and political sectors: declassified CIA documents point to internal disagreements among the generals as the key aspect to explain the incident.”

In early 1979 it was time to choose a new commander-in-chief, as Gregorio Álvarez had already served for the maximum term allowed in this post, eight years. The choice of his

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4 Ibid., p. 51.
successor led to another heated debate, and the man eventually chosen was Juan V. Queirolo, who represented the return of the “hard line”.

Finally, in the 1980 referendum to reform the constitution, the “No” vote won (with 57.9%). This constituted an important milestone as it very publicly signalled the population’s disapproval of the regime’s policies.

The democratic transition

Two important events took place almost simultaneously in late 1982. The first was a financial crisis on 25 November, brought on by the dictatorship’s economic policies, and the second, three days later, was the holding of intraparty elections on 25 November.

In mid-1983, the first negotiations between the country’s legal political parties and the de facto government were held, in what came to be known as the “Parque Hotel negotiations”.

In 1984, new negotiations with the Armed Forces began, this time without the participation of the National Party but including the leftist Frente Amplio party. In March of that same year, General Liber Seregni, the top leader of the Frente Amplio who had run for president in 1971, was released from prison.

On 16 June, in the midst of a serious political crisis and a harshly repressive atmosphere, a top leader of the National Party and the sector opposed to the dictatorship, Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, returned to Montevideo from exile and was arrested.

A new agreement between political parties and the military known as the “Naval Club pact” gave rise to the holding of elections and the approval of Institutional Act No. 19.

On 25 November 1984, national elections took place, with numerous politicians banned from running (including Wilson Ferreira and Liber Seregni), more than 5,000 citizens deprived of the right to vote, and some 300 political prisoners still in jail. In the end, the winning ticket was that of the Colorado Party, made up by Julio María Sanguinetti (president) and Enrique Tarigo (vice president).

On 15 February 1985, the first parliament elected by the citizens in 12 years was installed, and on 1 March the new president took office. As a result, on 14 March of that year, by virtue of the National Pacification Law, the last political prisoners were
released, including those who had been considered “hostages” during the dictatorship. This marked the beginning of a new period of the consolidation of democracy, which continues until today.

**Provenance of the documentary heritage**

The documentary heritage contained in the Archives dates back to the beginning of the activities of the Commission for Peace (COMIPAZ) in 2000. The documents comprised by the Archives served as the testimonial basis for the preparation of the Commission’s “Final Report” in 2003. Subsequently, the Archives’ collections continued to expand with the documents generated by the investigations undertaken by COMIPAZ, as well as through the reception of other collections and materials through transfers or donations from civil society organizations, the national Public Archives, foreign national archives, and other organizations. In addition, the institution of which the Archives form part has undergone several name changes. The original Commission for Peace continued its activities as the “Secretariat for Follow-up to COMIPAZ” and from 2013 forwards as the “Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past” (SDDHHPR).

In 2011, a team of archivists was incorporated into the Secretariat and given responsibility for the scientific handling of the documents contained in the Archives. This team developed and presented a Strategic Archival Plan, with the following main objectives: study of the institutional history, documentary organization, identification of types and series of documents, and archival descriptions based on the international standards ISAD(G), ISAAR (CPF) and ISDIAH.

In addition, the resulting descriptions were added to a Unified Database on the Disappeared and Murdered corresponding to the years 1968-1985.

Software is currently being developed for the recovery of specific documents for personal records, for the internal archival service of the SDDHHPR, which already has archival description instruments to facilitate access to information.

Dissemination of the SDDHHPR Archives’ collections is carried out through an institutional website, which is continuously updated and managed by the team of archivists.
3.3 Bibliography


CALACE, José. (1988). *Quince años en el infierno*. Montevideo: TAE.


________________. (2003). *La Universidad de la República desde el golpe de Estado a la intervención: cronología de hechos, documentos y testimonios (junio a diciembre 1973)*. Montevideo: FHCE.


4. Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage

Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past
Plaza Independencia 776 – Centro
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4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage

Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past of the Office of the President of the Republic of Uruguay
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11100 – Montevideo - Uruguay
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4.3 Legal status

The Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past has legal custody of all of the collections and materials contained in the archives.

4.4 Accessibility

Category: Public institution

The Law on Access to Public Information (Law N° 18.381 of 17 October 2008) establishes in article 12 that there can be no limitations on access to documents related to cases of human rights violations.

As part of their archival management, once the documents are organized they are digitized in order to provide access to users. The primary users of the documents are the


Justice system, relatives of victims of human rights violations, and duly accredited researchers.

4.5 Copyright status

All of the documentary heritage is owned by the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past.

5. Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity

All of the documents are authentic archive documents and authenticated copies produced by the Uruguayan public administration during the dictatorship period. Of particular significance are the unique military documents from the National Ministry of Defence, produced by the Information and Defence Service (SID) and the Coordinating Body of Anti-Subversive Operations (OCOA). There are also documents from different civil society organizations, as well as archive documents produced specifically by the SDDHHPR itself, comprising the documents produced by the teams of historians, anthropologists and archivists and by the unit for the follow-up, investigation and accompaniment of victims of State terrorism.

It should be stressed that in Uruguay there is a Genetic Database of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared that operates under the aegis of the SDDHHPR and is managed and kept by the National Cell, Tissue and Organ Donation and Transplant Institute of the Ministry of Public Health.

The Genetic Database contains the genetic profiles and corresponding digital images of autosomal markers and XY chromosomes (when applicable) obtained in its own laboratory. Access is restricted and controlled by the Forensic Genetics Department. The database contains biological samples and genetic profiles of 192 relatives of 105 disappeared persons.

5.2 World significance

Is the heritage unique and irreplaceable? Would its disappearance constitute a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of humanity? Has it created great impact over time and/or within a particular cultural area of the world? Has it had great influence (positive or negative) on the course of history?
The preservation of the documentary heritage that is currently housed in the Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past forms part of a high priority policy of the Uruguayan State, as this institution has managed to systematically organize the largest amount of information and documentation on the fate of detained-disappeared Uruguayans and on the different mechanisms of State terrorism during the civilian-military dictatorship of 1973-1985.

The heritage comprises documents from state bodies and agencies as well as from civil society organizations and the Secretariat’s own historical and anthropological investigation teams. As a result, it documents the different accounts, resolutions and positions on the events of the recent past produced by institutions and groups of people directly involved in the acts of State terrorism.

If the documentary heritage in these Archives is not preserved or is placed at risk, this would not only be detrimental to the investigations that are currently underway, in connection with different strategies for reparations, truth and justice, but it would also hinder, in the medium term, a substantial improvement in policies related to memory and historical interpretation of the events of the period in question.

On the other hand, given that the Uruguayan dictatorship acted in coordination with other forces on a regional level, the preservation of the Archives is not only important with regard to the recent past of Uruguay but also for the recent past of the entire Southern Cone region of Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil).

The scientific organization of documentary heritage linked to conflict-ridden pasts is a highly complex undertaking for societies that decide to carry out this process. It implies “making present” a past that to some degree evokes different interpretations and positions regarding the democratic political order restored in Uruguay in 1985 after almost 12 years of dictatorship. In particular, it challenges the logic of impunity of crimes against humanity committed by agents of the state in the recent past, and reclaims the place of the victims in the democratic present. The gradual process through which the archives have been built represents an exemplary policy of memory. Yet because the archives challenge institutional “silence” and “lack of memory”, there is a risk of their value not being duly recognized. The support of international programmes like Memory of the World contributes to ensuring that the preservation of this type of archive is not subject to the political discretion of the governments or leaders of the day, and ensures the public dissemination and accessibility of the documents it contains.
Moreover, State terrorism was not only a regional phenomenon but rather is internationally related to different forms of authoritarianism witnessed by humanity in the 20th century, especially in the Southern Cone. In this universal sense, the preservation of the Human Rights Secretariat Archives makes it possible to compare, at a regional and international level, the common traits and differences, the demise and continuity, of authoritarianism and its various forms in different eras of the history of humanity; this is of particular importance for consultation by organizations and researchers or victims in different parts of the world.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

1. Time

Most of the documents date to the period of the Uruguayan dictatorship (1973-1985).

2. Place

Uruguay —and closely related, similar events that occurred in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay as part of a coordinated programme of repression known as the “Condor Plan”.

3. People

The victims of human rights violations during the military dictatorship, understood as the disappeared and the families and relatives of the victims.

4. Subject and theme

Does the subject matter of the document represent particular historical or intellectual developments in the natural, social and human sciences? Or in politics, ideology, sport or the arts?

The documents stored in the Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat have a high legal, evidentiary and testimonial value for the justice system, as well as informational value for interpretations of the recent past from the perspective of the social and human sciences. The documents represent objective resources that can be consulted for specific or interdisciplinary research and studies, both national and foreign, in the fields of history, sociology, political science, anthropology, law and journalism, among others.
The approval in Uruguay of the Law on the Expiry of the Punitive Claims of the State, also known as the Amnesty Law, in 1985, meant that for the following 20 years, there was no possibility of criminal legal investigations into the crimes against humanity committed under the dictatorship and those responsible for them. It also made it impossible to work towards the reconstruction of the historical truth based on state documentary sources. To a large extent, until the establishment of the Secretariat Archives, the history of state terrorism was recounted and denounced by the victims of the dictatorship themselves, through their public testimonies and the presentation of their own documentary evidence, which meant they were obliged to suffer re-victimization.

From 2007 forwards, through the various investigations carried out by the different teams who make up the Secretariat, and from 2010 forwards, through the law that restored the punitive authority of the state and the proliferation of complaints and criminal proceedings filed in the courts, the Archives of the Secretariat have become the primary source of information for judges dealing with human rights cases, as well as for the special commission for Uruguayan State reparations for victims of the dictatorship.

Finally, it should be stressed that the historical research on the detained-disappeared and the results of the investigations by forensic anthropologists, and the resulting documents stored by the Secretariat Archives, constitute an example of how the study of the country’s and region’s “recent past” in the fields of the social and human studies has developed since 2005. This development has been made possible through the use of this documentary heritage which has undoubtedly led to a breakthrough in our knowledge and understanding of this period in history.

As for its importance for the public domain, we should stress that all of the policies related to memory and reparations carried out during the last two government administrations were made possible in large part by the creation of these Archives and the teams of university researchers and archivists connected to them, which have systematically contributed to these efforts.

5. Form and style

The documentary heritage that comprises the Archives is primarily made up of paper documents, photographs, maps, books, press cuttings, cassette tapes and video tapes.

6. Social / spiritual / community significance

The Archives store and manage material that documents events and episodes of serious human rights violations, including murders, torture, forced disappearances, and the theft
of children born in captivity, which means their existence has a highly significant social and cultural impact.

From a social perspective, the Archives meet society’s demand for the gathering and organization of and access to documents and testimonies that reflect the events of the dictatorship, in addition to their importance for the functioning of the legal system, among others.

From a cultural perspective, the Archives represent a reservoir of memory that will make it possible for future generations to learn about what happened, and in this way, to help ensure that it will never happen again. As a result, the archives are an instrument that contributes to creating a more humane society.

6. Contextual Information

6.1 Rarity

The documentary heritage of the Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past is made up of original documents that are unique and irreplaceable, testifying to forced disappearances and serious human rights violations in Uruguay. The collection is a primary source of information and is documentary evidence for the justice system.

The rarity of these documents is due to their being part of the repressive operations of the dictatorship period, not only in Uruguay, but also in coordination with other countries in the region where this type of state terrorism occurred.

6.2 Integrity

None of the documents held in the Archives of the Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past has been altered; their integrity and reliability have been maintained and the original order arising from the institutions where they were created has been respected.

However, the document collections received belonging to the period of the dictatorship have been recovered from different sources, and they have been acquired by means of institutional agreements, transfers and donations.

The document collections are preserved in good physical conditions and within a good building structure.

It should be emphasized that the preservation of these collections is very important to ensure their survival over a long period of time, in the face of various factors, such as changes of government, or external risks such as natural disasters, among others.