

# NEWS LETTER

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X Anniversary

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### NATIONAL MEETING OF UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

On September 25 this year, the Mexican National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH, in its Spanish acronym), called for a National Meeting of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education. The main objective was to gather their judgment of the problem matters which, under the heading of Human Rights, afflict Mexico, and discuss proposals leading towards systematic and continuous formation in Human Rights and include these subjects in the syllabi, from elementary to higher education.

Identifying the main problems which hinder the effective exercise of fundamental rights and proposing certain measures which lead towards their solution, are a challenge which must be faced by institutions of the Mexican State and society in general, in the dawn of this century and at the beginning of a new Government, to define a national policy of Human Rights and take part in the design of a National Development Plan in accordance with current circumstances and social concerns.

In this sense, the President of the CNDH, Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández, pointed out that no one can be excluded from this effort. Moreover, the political and social actors, and the media must be included, for Human Rights issues must become an everyday part of the national debate and, to create a true culture in this matter, they must be disseminated as widely as possible.

The National Commission, conscious of the transcendence of this aim, took on a work project called "The Main Problems in the Subject of Human Rights in Mexico and Possible Solutions", which began with an inquiry made at the Human Rights Commissions and Attorneys around the country. The resulting statements and proposals were fruitful and rich, and will be sent to the next government for consideration in the shaping of the National Development Plan.

This is the same intent which inspired the invitation to a work meeting in which 23 representatives of institutions of higher education, which have always been present in the institutional, political and legal changes in Mexico, took part.

The issues listed below are, from the universities' and institutions' of higher education standpoint, solutions to the problem matter existing in the subject of Human Rights, among which stand out:

"In the long-term, and by all possible means, society must be provided with comprehensive education leading to the harmonic formation of the person, with a healthy balance between the scientific-technological and ethical-cultural aspects, in which, with a humanistic focus, the student develops his capacities to learn how to learn, learn how to be, learn how to do, and learn how to live together.

In the mid-term we must strive for institutions of higher education, both public and private, to concentrate part of their efforts towards an ethic formation, and endow their study plans and programs with a humanistic vision, thus, raising conscience in this sense among the students.

Include the subject of Human Rights in the syllabi of all Law Schools in Mexican universities.

Institutions of higher education must commit themselves to assign an important percentage of alumni from schools and Faculties of Law, so that they lend their services to the Human Rights Commissions and Attorneys.

Promote a national Diploma Course in Human Rights and humanitarian issues, with the participation of universities, the Mexican National Commission and other institutions included in this project.

On the subject of environment and Human Rights immediate actions must be taken to strengthen university education: a) teaching, include the subject of Human Rights and environment in the professional syllabi; b) research, form multi-disciplinary teams to address it scientifically; c) extension, social practice of environment protection; d) culture, disseminate and inform through the media on what is done, how it is done and its social importance.

It is not a question of designing, from a desk, the ways of incorporating society to the struggle against crime, but rather of strengthening the civil society's initiatives to construct effective policies, which solve the main problems of public insecurity. A progressive process of growing control from the State and the political society on the part of the civil society is required. There are two possibilities: one is opening the public State spheres to civil society participation, that is, establishing several juridically constituted organisms which are in the hands of civilians and thus act as an institutional counterbalance; and the other, with the different forms of rebellion inscribed in the framework of non violent actions.

Train prosecuting organisms so that when they carry out procedures and proof evidence they do so in an ethical, efficient and professional manner, avoiding that the preliminary verifications they integrate are deficient or incomplete.

Widely disseminate, among the prosecuting and judicial authorities, the content and reach of the international instruments of Human Rights ratified by Mexico, so as to avoid pitfalls in their compliance and application.

The institutions in charge of the procuration of justice and public servants working in these must be checked and exposed to more rigorous auditing and revisions to avoid any type of practice which transgresses the rights of people.

Human Rights organisms, together with universities, should draw up initiatives to modify the organic laws governing the former's action, so as to know of violations to human rights in administrative matters committed by public servants of the Judicial Power, of their jurisdictions, and of the Local Boards of Conciliation and Arbitrage.

It is necessary to strengthen mass media campaigns devoted to promoting respect for Human Rights and disseminating theoretical-conceptual elements, which aid the reinforcement of a culture of respect for human dignity.

Increase the number of training courses, talks and workshops given for society in general, in which Human Rights organisms and universities take part.

Institutions of higher education and Human Rights organisms must strive for compliance with second and third generation rights, as up to now they have only devoted their efforts to the observance of first generation rights."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No. 16/2000

September 12, 2000

Case: Bursting of a dam in the sewage canal called "La Compañía", Municipality of Chalco, State of Mexico.

Authorities Addressed: National Water Commission.

Recommendation No. 17/2000

September 14, 2000

Case: Mrs. Armida Lara Prado.

Authorities Addressed: Governor of the State of Nuevo León.

Recommendation No. 18/2000

September 18, 2000

Case: Refutation measure brought by Mrs. Rebeca Maltos Garza and Mrs. Silvia Resendiz Flores.

Authorities Addressed: Governor of the State of Baja California.

Recommendation No. 19/2000

September 20, 2000

Case: Mr. Jesús Humberto Zazueta Aguilar.

Authorities Addressed: Attorney General of the Republic, Attorney General for Military Justice, and Governor of the State of Guerrero.

Recommendation No. 20/2000

September 20, 2000

Case: Inhabitants of the community El Charco, Municipality of Ayutla de los Libres, State of Guerrero.

Authorities Addressed: Minister of National Defense.

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

### Committee for Juvenile Human Rights is Created

With the aim of guaranteeing the Human Rights of the Mexican Youth, Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández, President of the Mexican National Commission for Human Rights, together with Ignacio Sánchez Gómez, Director General of the Mexican Institute for Youth (IMJ, in its Spanish acronym), a decentralized public organism belonging to the Ministry of Education, signed a Cooperation Agreement on September 12 in Mexico City, through which the Committee for Juvenile Human Rights was instituted.

During the act of the Agreement, Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández pointed out that youngsters demand the commitment of specialized organisms, as is the case of the Mexican Institute for Youth and the Mexican National Commission itself, so that young people are directed in the knowledge of their rights. Ignacio Sánchez Gómez stated that the protection and respect of Human Rights cannot be restricted to vigilance to avoid police violence when it is patent that there are thousands of youngsters in extreme situations of exclusion and injustice. Hence, he declared public institutions must take on the responsibility of instrumenting policies which generate respect for the Human Rights of young Mexicans and, in doing so, ensure equity.

### Cycle of Conferences and Round Tables: "Human Rights of the Detained"

During the month of September, the cycle of conferences and round tables was devoted to "The Human Rights of the Detained".

The speakers who took part in this event included Dr. Sergio García Ramírez, Member of the Board of the CNDH, with the conference "The Human Rights of the Detained"; Jorge Antonio Mirón Reyes, from the National Institute of Criminal Sciences, in a round table on "Prisoner's Defense Mechanisms"; Dr. Antonio Sánchez Galindo, from the Council for Minors, in the roundtable "Prison and Human Rights"; Dr. Emma Mendoza Bremauntz, from the Faculty of Law of the UNAM, in the roundtable "Illegal Privation of Freedom and Human Rights"; Dr. Ignacio Carrillo Prieto, from the General Director's Office for Prevention and Treatment of Minors, S. G., with the conference "Human Rights and Minor Infractions"; José Luis Musi N. S. G., with the paper "Human Rights and Penitentiaryism"; Dr. Elena Azaola, from CIESAS, in the roundtable "The Rights of Minors Deprived of Freedom", and Oscar Rodríguez Álvarez, from the CNDH, with the conference "Human Rights and Indigenous Inmates".

The month of October will be devoted to "The Human Rights of HIV- and AIDS-infected People".

Remember we meet every Thursday at 18:00 hours in the lobby of the National Commission headquarters.

### Training Courses

The National Commission for Human Rights, following the spirit promoted by the institution of the Ombudsman to disseminate the study, teaching and diffusion of Human Rights, during the month of September, undertook several activities related to Human Rights.

Personnel belonging to the training area of the National Commission gave 13 workshops, one roundtable, two workshop-courses, four conferences, one diploma course, and one forum. Moreover, as requested by the Regional Center for Teacher Training "Benito Juárez", the Autonomous University of Hidalgo, the National University of Pedagogy, and the local Congress in Pachuca, State of Hidalgo, a presentation was given of the "Minimum Agenda of Education in Human Rights", as well as several work meetings to propose joint activities with the Ibero-American University, Campus Tijuana, the NGO Friendly Hand A. C., the Foundation Support for Children, and the YMCA Home for Migrants.

The subjects of the training activities were varied, the most important being: Education in Human Rights, Civic Education, the Human Rights of the Disabled, Women's Human Rights, the Human Rights of the Elderly, the Concept of Human Rights, Individual Guarantees and the CNDH's competence, the Rights and Duties of Nursing Staff, the Rights and Duties of Patients, the Role of Non Governmental Organisms and Human Rights, Children's Human Rights, the Human Rights of the Disabled and School Integration, the Defense and Protection of Children, the Formation of Promoters in Rights, and the CNDH and NGOs.

These courses were coordinated by several government and non-governmental organizations and addressed personnel from the following institutions: in the State of Aguascalientes a training course was given in collaboration with the National Institute for Social Development; in the city of Tijuana, State of Baja California, with the organization "Citizen Movement for Democracy"; in the Federal District and metropolitan area training courses were given in High School No. 5 belonging to the National Autonomous University of

Mexico, in the Mexican Committee for the Campaign against Children Mistreatment in Central America and Mexico, and with the ISSSTE in the Iztapalapa Delegation. In the State of Hidalgo, with the Regional Center for Teacher Training "Benito Juárez", the Autonomous University of Hidalgo, the National University of Pedagogy and the local Congress in Pachuca, in that State.

Likewise, in the city of Guadalajara, State of Jalisco, several courses were given in collaboration with the organization "Light of the World" and "The Church of the Living God", and in the State of Puebla, with the Faculty of Stomatology, belonging to the Autonomous University of Puebla. Furthermore, in coordination with the ISSSTE delegations in the cities of Cuernavaca, State of Morelos, Acapulco, State of Guerrero, Toluca, State of Mexico, Durango, State of Durango, Culiacan, State of Sinaloa and Hermosillo, State of Sonora training courses were given addressing the personnel of these institutions.

Lastly, with the Ministry of National Defense, in the facilities of the general headquarters of Military Regions I, VII and VIII, located in the Venustiano Carranza Delegation in the Federal District, in Tuxtla Gutierrez, State of Chiapas, and in Oaxaca, State of Oaxaca, respectively, training courses were given to the members of these regiments.

RADIO AND TELEVISION During the month of September, 2000, the General Director's Office for Social Communication belonging to the Mexican National Commission transmitted on Radio Universidad's broadcast Argumentos, four one-hour programs on the following topics: "The Death Penalty", "The Human Rights of the Detained", "The Mexican Penitentiary System", and "The Prevention of Crime".

PUBLICATIONS Gaceta, the National Commission for Human Rights' official monthly publication, Nos. 118 and 119, corresponding to the months of May and June, 2000.

"Primer Foro Regional de Organismos Gubernamentales" [First Regional Forum on Government Organisms], Mexican National Commission for Human Rights, September, 2000, (triptych).

"Jornadas de los Derechos Humanos y Política Criminal" [Working Days on Human Rights and Crime Policy], Mexican National Commission for Human Rights, September, 2000, (triptych).

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