

Speech of Marta Ocampo de Vásquez to the Human Rights Council (June 22, Geneva)

Your Excellencies Mr President, Madame High Commissioner, distinguished Delegates, friends and NGO colleagues.

I am still asking myself why am I here before you today

And that question has brought me to reflect on the last thirty years of my family life, overshadowed during the Argentine Military Dictatorship(1976-83) with the abduction and enforced disappearance of my daughter, Maria Marta, together with her husband Cesar, an event which took place on that evil night of May 14th 1976. They were taken away from us and never again could we know of them as with many other thousands of victims. They were entered into a tunnel of darkness out of which they could never return.

With my husband, an Argentine diplomat, we began our search believing and hoping most innocently for their quick return. It was the love for my daughter that impelled me into this struggle and it was that which has guided and sustained me during these long thirty years which I have travelled in the defence of human rights.

In May 1977 I joined the fledging movement of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, then sarcastically called the "*Mad Women*" by the authorities. Together with those fellow women I began a learning process. I began to realize that I was not only searching for my own daughter and son-in-law, but for all the disappeared sons and daughters of Argentina, and of Latin America, and today for all the "Desaparecidos" around the world.

When I discovered that my daughter had been pregnant when taken, I joined the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo and began to learn of another most painful and harsh experience, the search for my grand child whom I have not yet been able to locate.

I have participated in many activities for the disappeared both in Argentina and in other countries. I represented the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo at the First Congress of the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees - FEDEFAM - held in Costa Rica in January 1981.

I was present at the Paris Colloquium in 1981. Many images from then are recorded forever in me and what I experienced then has been fulfilling itself on the long road I have travelled. And that has led me to new and enriching experiences.

On many occasions I have assisted meetings of the UN Commission on Human Rights. In 1999 I was elected president of FEDEFAM a position I held until November 2003. I participated as FEDEFAM delegate in the Open Ended Intersessional Working Group entrusted with drafting a binding legal instrument for the protection of all persons against Enforced Disappearances, and convened by the UN in Geneva.

Currently I am President of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (Founders Line) Association.