In November of 2009, Elizabeth Bartholet, American lawyer and professor at Harvard University, presented a case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), asking that the Commission declare that a child’s most fundamental right is to grow up in a loving family, and that it follows that adoption is a right.

Bartholet also asked that the Commission recognize that in countries like Peru, Honduras, and Guatemala, restrictions on international adoptions such as the prohibition of private intermediaries, and temporary moratoria on international adoption, violate the fundamental rights of children.

Why is Bartholet interested in adoption? Who is she? The fight for adoption rights is part of Elizabeth’s personal history. In the fall of 1985, she adopted a Peruvian boy she named Christopher, and two years later, she adopted Michael. Two decades have passed, and Elizabeth considers herself incredibly fortunate to have been able to parent these boys, but she laments that international adoption has been practically eliminated in Peru.

Why did you come to Peru to adopt your children? When I was a child I had a good friend who had grown up in Lima because her father was the American ambassador. This friend filled my head with stories about the marvels of Peru: the art, the historical ruins… So, when I decided to adopt, I wanted to adopt children from a country I was drawn to, I thought of Peru. A colleague of mine and his wife had adopted Peruvian twins, so I contacted the lawyer who helped them.

In those years how long did the adoption process take? They told me that the amount of time it would take was unpredictable, but that the average wait was at least three months. I felt that the process was too long, since most people don’t have the liberty of spending so much time away from home and work. I was lucky that my work gave me that flexibility.

Today is it more difficult to adopt a Peruvian child? Yes. Today the adoption process is more difficult. The State Monopolizes Adoption. Why is this the case? This American lawyer adopted two Peruvian babies in the 80s. She says that rigid adoption laws have reduced the possibility that other foreigners can do the same.