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CIDH Asked to Investigate Situation of Orphans in Latin America

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Washington, November 6 (*Notimex*). United States organizations requested today that the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (CIDH) make a special investigation into the situation of orphan children in Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru to determine if they are being adequately protected.

The children’s law program at Harvard University and the Center of Adoption Policies requested, during a solicited audience at CIDH, that the organization determine the number of orphans in these countries, their living conditions, and if they are the object of abuses.

“We need more specific information about the situation of parents of children retained in shelters, the need for systems to identify who can be the object of adoption, the nature of current adoption regulations, and the need for adoption reforms,” said the petitioner Elizabeth Bartholet.

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Bartholet, Harvard University professor, indicated that Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru have an “honorable tradition” of commitment to human rights of the most vulnerable people.

“In the case that the (three) countries look for a friendly solution to the human rights violations they are being accused of, we would consider working with them towards legal and political reform,” indicated Bartholet.

The academic alluded to the fact that extreme poverty, civil unrest, war, and general sickness have resulted in large numbers of orphans, abandoned or turned in by their parents to institutional care in Latin America.

However, she indicated that in Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru, international adoptions have practically ceased, to the extent that currently these countries send less than 1% of the number of children as were sent in past years.

And even in these cases, she argued, the process is slow, in addition to the fact that no institutions exist to care for older children or children with mental or physical disabilities.

“The many thousands of children each year who could be given permanently to families who attend to their needs, are now almost certainly languishing in institutions or in the streets,” she lamented.

For this reason, the petitioners requested that the CIDH have the Rapporteur of the Rights of Children conduct the investigation in the three countries and issue a report of the conclusions.