

# Be a Hero for a Better World

## Maria Julia Hernández (1939-2007)

*"Victims should come first."*

Maria Julia Hernández Chavarría was a leading human rights advocate for the victims of the civil war in El Salvador. She was born to a wealthy family, but felt compassion for the poor at an early age. As a child, she thought she could help by entering a religious order, but instead studied law and later became a professor of human rights and international law in El Salvador.

In 1977, after a Jesuit priest who had been helping the poor was murdered, she met Archbishop Oscar Romero who had led the public mass for the murdered priest. In his message that day she heard her calling. She had witnessed great suffering in her war-ravaged country, and she knew that she had to dedicate her life to protecting the human rights of the Salvadorian people.

In 1982, she became the Founding Director of Tutela Legal (Legal Protection), the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador. Tutela Legal works to seek justice for Salvadorian victims of violence. Maria Julia Hernandez received the 1991 Pacem in Terris Award for Peace and Freedom and was nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize as part of the 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize project.



"After a war, the silencing of arms is not enough. Peace means respecting all rights. You can't respect one of them and violate the others. When a society doesn't respect the rights of its citizens, it undermines peace and leads it back to war."

Maria Julia Hernández was born on January 30, 1939 in Francisco Morazán, Honduras

### Be A Hero For A Better World!

1. Find out more about this hero
2. Hold an event to raise awareness about human rights issues
3. Contribute to organizations working to defend human rights

### Human Rights Organizations

- Amnesty International ([amnesty.org](http://amnesty.org))
- Carter Center ([cartercenter.org](http://cartercenter.org))
- Human Rights First ([humanrightsfirst.org](http://humanrightsfirst.org))
- Human Rights Watch ([hri.org](http://hri.org))
- Rights International ([rightsinternational.org](http://rightsinternational.org))
- UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([ohchr.org](http://ohchr.org))
- Witness ([witness.org](http://witness.org))
- Women's Human Rights Net ([whrnet.org](http://whrnet.org))

For more information: [www.betterworldheroes.com/hernandez.htm](http://www.betterworldheroes.com/hernandez.htm)

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