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**In memoriam
Abram Chayes
(1922–2000)**

Felix Frankfurter, Professor of Law Emeritus, Harvard Law School

In the late afternoon of Sunday, 16 April 2000, *Abram Chayes* died in a Boston Hospital at the age of 77. His death ends the life of a most distinguished international legal scholar, brilliant and inspiring academic teacher as well as a dedicated public servant. He was a *citoyen* in the best sense of the word. But most importantly, *Abe* – the nickname that he let his family and his great number of personal friends use – was a wonderfully warmhearted and humane person, full of energy and a contagious enthusiasm and optimism. All those who were fortunate to learn to know him feel a deep sense of loss and share in the grief with his family.

Abram Chayes was born in Chicago in 1922. After graduating from Senn High School, he entered Harvard University in 1939, the place that – as he himself said – he never left. After receiving his A.B. degree in 1943, he served in the United States Army in both Europe and Asia and was discharged with the rank of Captain in 1946. He returned to Cambridge and entered Harvard Law School. His brilliance and intellectual force put him at the top of his class and was reflected in his term as President of the Harvard Law Review. Upon graduation, he served in various administrative positions in Connecticut and Washington, D.C. Later on, he clerked with Supreme Court Justice *Felix Frankfurter* and then worked with the law firm of *Covington & Burling*. He returned to Harvard and was appointed assistant professor in 1955 and became professor of law there in 1958. His only major break in serving Harvard Law School came about when he joined the *Kennedy* Administration where he served in the Department of State as Legal Adviser and became one of the most influential advisers of President *Kennedy*. His experience in Washington, which he enjoyed immensely, was recorded by him in his widely known book “The Cuban Missile Crisis,” published in 1974. In 1976 he was appointed Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. Generations of students have benefitted from his practical experience as well as from his vast scholarly work that ranged from Civil Procedure to the Law and Politics of Arms Control, International Environmental Law, the Law and Procedure of International Dispute Settlement, and new modes of international law enforcement – a concern that most

clearly evidenced his understanding of the very nature of the law as a means for non-violent peace-making and securing justice. Impressive illustrations of his approach are found in his book “International Legal Process” (co-authored) and the more recent book “The New Sovereignty. Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements” (1995/1998) that he wrote together with his wife, *Antonia Handler Chayes*, with whom he also taught many inspiring courses at Harvard. But it was not only *Abram Chayes*’ brilliant command of the law and his experience that fascinated his students. It was the impact of his humane personality and his dedication towards implanting a deep sense of values embodied in the law that molded the minds of his students and made them cherish him as the great academic teacher he was and will be always remembered. It was this very same commitment to basic human values that guided *Abram Chayes* in his scholarly writings and his teaching and that made him represent Nicaragua in the famous case *Nicaragua v. United States*. Called “America’s Accuser” in a profile published by the New York Times, *Abram Chayes* responded “that he was simply continuing his job as Legal Adviser of the State Department – trying to ensure that his country abided as faithfully as possible by the rules of the international system.”¹

During the years 1995 to 1999, I was fortunate enough to work with *Abram Chayes* in the preparation of the last case – the *Kasikili/Sedudu Island* case (*Namibia v. Botswana*) – he argued before the International Court of Justice. All I had heard about him was manifest in our meetings and private conversations. These qualities included his admirable command of the law and of the facts of the case, his untiring energy, his enthusiasm, and, of course, his humane leadership of the team of counsels. We became very close. It is rare that one wins such a great friend at a rather late stage in life. All the greater is the sense of loss that I share with all his friends and his family.

Jost Delbrück

¹Related by *Anne Marie Slaughter*, Tribute to Professor Abram Chayes, delivered at the HLSA Award Ceremony, 24 April 1999, available at: <http://www.law.harvard.edu/news/slaughter-chayes.html>.