



Peru's *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos*

A Case Study of Coalition Building

by Coletta A. Youngers and Susan C. Peacock

Peru's *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos*¹ (National Human Rights Coordinator) is one of the most successful country-based human rights coalitions in Latin America. An umbrella organization, the *Coordinadora* encompasses most of the country's leading traditional human rights groups. It has over sixty member organizations.

Organized in two sections, this case study seeks to answer two questions: How has the *Coordinadora* been able to remain unified, to carry out successful advocacy campaigns, and to become a prominent civil society actor in times of extreme violence and major political transition? What lessons can be learned from the experiences that the *Coordinadora* has had that can inform other civil society coalitions as they seek to carry out effective advocacy work?

The first section of the case study summarizes the history of the human rights movement in Peru. It traces how the *Coordinadora* came to be and highlights major accomplishments and challenges over the first fifteen years of its existence (1985-



2000). It identifies key actors in the movement and the roles that each played in its evolution. It tells the story of courageous efforts to defend human rights in the face of both extreme political violence and an abusive and corrupt regime. It describes how the *Coordinadora* emerged, along with other non-governmental organizations, at the

vanguard of civil society efforts to put Peru back on a democratic path.

The second section looks at the lessons learned from the *Coordinadora's* coalition-building efforts over the years. It lists sixteen characteristics of the *Coordinadora* that contribute to its effectiveness as a coalition.

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PART I. Peru's Human Rights Movement

History and Key Actors

The National Strike held on July 19, 1977 was a watershed event in the history of the Peruvian human rights movement. The military regime of General Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975-1980) had adopted a harsh structural adjustment program that led to an increase of approximately forty-five percent in the price of basic food products and to a dramatic deterioration in living standards.² A strike was called to protest increasing poverty and the repressive tactics of the government. Progressive political parties, labor unions and a vast array of grassroots and civil society organizations took to the streets in one of the largest protests in the nation's history.

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The military's response to the strike was harsh. According to the *Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones* (Center of Studies and Publications), the response was "one of the worst waves of repression unleashed by the government. With it, the government tried to behead the union movement, intimidate its leaders, and deliver a hard blow to the entire popular movement."³ At least sixteen Peruvians lost their lives as a result of the government's actions.⁴ Scores more were wounded, and an estimated 1,500 people were detained.

Two days after the strike, the government decreed that the public and private sectors were authorized to fire any employee who had not gone to work on the day of the

strike. Official figures indicate that 3,500 people were dismissed from their jobs over the next two weeks. Unions and popular organizations put the figure at 5,000.⁵

This loss of jobs had a significant galvanizing effect, generating even greater social discontent. In the two years that followed, strikes swept the country and were met with military repression, putting human rights issues at the center of the national debate. This combination of economic desperation and repression became the principal catalyst for the formation of local human rights groups around the country that had the support of the progressive sector of the Catholic church and leftwing political activists.

Peru is the birthplace of liberation theology. Many from the progressive sector of the Catholic church – bishops, priests, nuns and laity – seek to live out a "preferential option for the poor" and participated in efforts around the 1977 strike.

With the help of the *Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social* (CEAS, Episcopal Commission for Social Action), parishes around the country began providing material and legal assistance to detained workers and their families. They also sought to raise the consciousness of the population, organizing discussions on the plight of workers and other activities to educate people about human rights, socioeconomic justice and related issues.

As the primary agent of social activism within the institutional church, CEAS

promoted the formation of local human rights organizations and provided technical assistance to that end. The names of these organizations varied, but they were most often referred to as *vicarías* or *Comisiones de la Pastoral de la Dignidad Humana* (Commissions of Pastoral Work for Human Dignity).

In 1977, CEAS opened a human rights office. Human rights became part of its institutional work plan with two main areas of action. The first involved receiving complaints and testimonies, documenting abuses and disseminating information and analysis via publications. Direct work with victims of human rights violations and their families, consisting primarily of social and economic assistance and legal aid, was the second.

In 1978, the staff from the CEAS human rights office began meeting every two weeks with a group of religious who worked in shantytowns. In these meetings, they would share information and experiences, and reflect on the role of the church in confronting the country's structural socioeconomic and political inequities. The group grew and in 1979 the *Coordinación de la Pastoral de Dignidad Humana* (Coordinating Body for Pastoral Work for Human Dignity) was formed. The *Coordinación* became a space where common pastoral responses to human rights issues were shaped and later moved through official church structures by way of CEAS.⁶

Beginning in 1980, CEAS organized annual national meetings for all church-related human rights groups in the country. These meetings became a central means for sharing information and developing advocacy strategies to confront Peru's evolving human rights crisis. Groups in which pastoral agents participated were included in the meetings even when they did not have formal links to the church.

Local groups called *Comités de Derechos Humanos* (CODEHs, Human Rights Committees) were springing up across the country in response to the political

repression of strikes and other social mobilizations and in order to address pressing socioeconomic needs. The CODEHs brought together people from different sectors of civil society – government officials, teachers, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, leaders of unions and grassroots organizations, and sometimes political parties – to confront human rights issues of concern to the local population.⁷ Most of the committees were independent of the Catholic Church, though often religious were key members of the CODEHs and local bishops sometimes lent their political support.

The original CODEHs combined legal defense and human rights education, and also utilized local media outlets to address human rights issues. The range of strategies and activities developed at this time was later adopted by the larger human rights movement. For many Peruvians, the CODEHs were their first experience of working in a diverse coalition.

The Peruvian left also played an important role in the development of Peru's human rights movement. Unlike the Catholic Church, most left-wing political parties did not take up the human rights banner per se, considering it "bourgeois." Nonetheless, they shared the analysis that the country's human rights crisis was rooted in deep poverty and inequity.

Left-wing party activists worked at the community level with Peruvian workers who were victims of government repression after the 1977 strike – visiting jails, providing assistance to the detainees and their families, and the like. Many became active members of grassroots organizations, including CODEHs. As with the progressive church, left-wing political parties helped spawn a generation of human rights activists.

In 1979, prominent activists from progressive sectors of the Catholic and evangelical churches and left-wing political parties joined together to form the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (CONADEH,

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National Commission for Human Rights). CONADEH was an attempt to form a national coalition of diverse groups and individuals to work together to defend human rights. It was intended to have a national presence and to serve as a point of reference for the CODEHs and other local human rights groups emerging around the country. Local affiliates were set up in Ayacucho and Huancayo.

As was the case with most other groups at the time, CONADEH's human rights orientation was clearly socioeconomic in focus, though it increasingly took on issues of civil and political rights. The public communiqué announcing its founding affirmed: "In the area of economic, social and cultural rights in Peru, one finds the most severe and permanent problems regarding respect for human rights."⁸

A campaign for the reinstatement of fired workers was one of CONADEH's first activities. CONADEH provided legal and other support to those in jail, carried out human rights education initiatives, and organized a campaign against the death penalty. CONADEH also researched the first major report on torture in Peru, released in 1980.⁹

The coalition faced formidable challenges. The strong influence of one political party within CONADEH stifled the expression of diverse political viewpoints. Further, suspicion on the part of some groups in the provinces about a Lima-based attempt to create a "national" coalition made it difficult for CONADEH to fulfill its stated mandate to function as such.

Over time, CONADEH reoriented its work and evolved from a coalition into a human rights organization. Ultimately supplanted by the creation of the *Coordinadora*, it represented an important experience in coalition-building for the Peruvian human rights movement. In 1988 CONADEH changed its name to the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos* (COMISEDH, Human Rights Commission). It remains a key actor within the *Coordinadora*.

In 1984 another coalition-building initiative emerged, based out of Lima. The *Comisión de Derechos de la Persona y Construcción de la Paz* (CODEPP, Commission for the Rights of the Person and Peacebuilding) was a broad-based network of high profile individuals who could draw attention to the human rights concerns of grassroots church activists. An effort was made to involve church and political leaders from both the left and the right in order to move beyond the polarized debate on human rights.

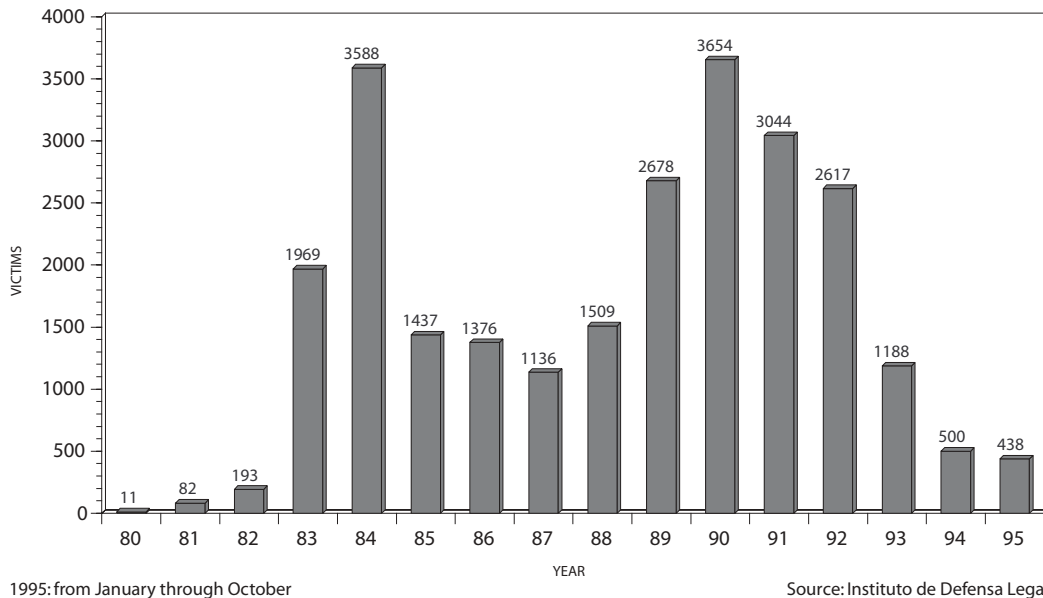
Sendero Luminoso and the spiral of violence

May 18, 1980 marked a turning point in Peruvian history. On that day, a civilian president was elected after twelve years of military rule, and, at the same time, the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) guerrilla movement launched its armed revolution. Peru's insurgency was born at the same moment that left-wing political parties were doing well in elections.

The Peruvian military's response to the guerrilla threat was consistent with regional trends. Peru followed the low-intensity conflict doctrine that the United States taught to Latin American militaries, and its counterinsurgency tactics mimicked the violent methods employed in Argentina and Chile. In December 1982, President Belaunde imposed a state of emergency in several of the nation's departments. The civilian government abdicated its responsibility for maintaining internal public order to an emboldened military, a pattern that continued for many years.

A vicious spiral of violence ensued. As indicated in the chart above, the period from 1983 to 1985 was particularly bloody. By the beginning of 1985, nearly 6,000 Peruvians had lost their lives as a result of political violence. In addition, Human Rights Watch reported in 1985 that 1,300 formal complaints had been filed concerning disappearance at the hands of state agents.¹⁰ The vast majority of victims were poor peasants of indigenous descent. Random detentions and torture became

Victims of Political Violence in Peru (1980-1995)



routine. The judiciary failed to function as an effective check on the abuses that occurred. As of 1995, the Instituto de Defensa Legal in Lima had recorded more than 25,000 political killings. More recent investigations by an official truth commission indicate that the total number of dead is probably over 40,000 and the number of disappeared well over 4,000.

Even as more information became available about human rights violations committed by state forces, conservative political leaders continued to view human rights as an obstacle to waging a successful war against the guerrillas. Human rights defenders were branded as direct or indirect supporters of the insurgents – either as the legal arm of subversion or as – “useful fools.” Politicians insisted that only the insurgents abused human rights, denying any state responsibility. When denunciations of human rights violations were made, they were routinely declared false by government authorities, without any meaningful investigation.

Far from neutralizing *Sendero* activities, over the short term the hard-line tactics of the Peruvian military initially led to increased popular support for the guerrillas.

Sendero’s presence expanded out from its initial base in Ayacucho into other departments and strategic areas of the country. Unabashedly targeting civilians was part of *Sendero*’s expansion strategy. The April 1983 massacre of eighty-seven peasants, including women and children, in Lucanamarca and Huancasancos dramatically drove this point home and marked a significant turning point in public attitudes towards *Sendero*. Its popular support declined markedly by the middle of the decade.

By the mid-1980s, most Peruvians considered *Sendero* a terrorist organization, language adopted across the political spectrum. Efforts to end the conflict against *Sendero* were universally called “pacification strategies,” whether they were comprehensive peace proposals put forward by human rights groups or military strategies advocated by the political elite.

In 1984, several leftist splinter groups came together to form another guerrilla movement, the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA, Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement). In June of that year, MRTA rebels occupied a radio station and read a communiqué that

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The La Cantuta case was a high profile case of forced disappearances. Nine students and a professor were disappeared during a military operation at a Lima University in July 1992. Above, family members protest impunity in the case, holding a banner declaring that they refuse to be silent.

officially launched their campaign against the Peruvian government. Modeled along the lines of Cuban-inspired guerrilla movements, the MRTA presented itself as an alternative to both *Sendero's* radicalism and the prevailing order. In contrast to *Sendero*, the MRTA solicited the support of popular organizations and carried out high-profile, Robin Hood-type acts to win over Peru's poor. As a result, some sectors of the population were initially sympathetic to the MRTA.

The development of the human rights community

There was a significant shift in the way that the human rights movement developed during this period. Whereas earlier, organizing had occurred in response to labor rights issues and pressing socioeconomic concerns, groups formed during the armed conflict focused on traditional human rights violations related to the right to life and grounded their efforts in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international covenants. Support for family members of those detained was extended to include those whose spouses or children were killed or disappeared. Legal assistance was provided to those unjustly accused of guerrilla activity and to the families of those who had disappeared. Eventually, support for the growing number of internally displaced, fleeing conflict zones,

was also added to the agenda. A number of key human rights organizations were established in Lima in the early 1980s, including the following:

- ▶ **Amnesty International (AI):** In 1981, the Peruvian section of AI was reorganized at the initiative of the International Secretariat. Through that Secretariat, AI was the first organization to denounce internationally the human rights violations taking place in Ayacucho. Although AI's internal guidelines precluded the Peruvian section from working on human rights cases in Peru, it played an important role in "disseminating information on the world human rights movement, on international human rights instruments, and on specific types of human rights violations such as torture."¹¹ AI aided in the professional development of the movement, setting clear standards and guidelines for documenting cases of human rights violations impartially and within the framework of international human rights norms.
- ▶ **Comisión Andina de Juristas (CAJ, Andean Commission of Jurists):** When the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) decided to open an affiliate in the Andean region, the CAJ was founded in 1982 with its central office in Lima. It provided information on human rights issues throughout the Andes, and sometimes convened national human rights groups at the regional level. It trained and provided technical assistance to judicial personnel and non-governmental advocates in order to enhance their ability to carry out effective justice. Its international standing and prestige lent credibility to the *Coordinadora* in its crucial initial years.
- ▶ **Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH, Pro Human Rights Association):** In 1983, a group of professionals who had been providing assistance to newly elected left-wing members of Congress – in particular,

Javier Diez Canseco, one of the most active members of the Congressional Human Rights Commission, and Julio César Galindo, a Representative from Ayacucho – came together to form APRODEH. APRODEH had access to official information from Congress, which facilitated its human rights investigations and legal defense. APRODEH's greatest asset, however, was its relations with progressive grassroots groups around the country that provided it with solid information about the human rights situation on the ground.

- ▶ **Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL, Legal Defense Institute):** IDL was another important human rights group launched at this time. Its initial focus was on both human rights violations stemming from the conflict and on labor rights and the defense of union leaders and other workers. Over time IDL devoted more and more of its efforts to denouncing the worsening situation of political violence, providing legal assistance to victims and human rights education. It focused its legal defense work on the rights to life, physical integrity, personal liberty and access to justice. While based in Lima, from its inception IDL worked closely with lawyers and human rights groups all over the country.

Human rights work in the emergency zones

The human rights groups that formed in the early 1980s were most successful in areas outside of the emergency zones. In Ayacucho, initial efforts to form human rights groups met with such repression that groups were simply unable to operate openly, if at all.

Human rights work in the emergency zones of Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac was further complicated by the stance of local leaders of the Catholic Church, who were openly hostile. In these areas, conservative local bishops prevented church-based human rights organizations

from being established, and hindered, or even prevented outright, the work of CEAS. Even as late as 1986, when political violence had decimated the region, Archbishop Federico Richter Prada of Ayacucho vetoed the establishment of a human rights office in his diocese.¹²

For several years evangelical churches, which traditionally shied away from political involvement of any kind, ignored the mounting human rights and social crisis in the emergency zones, even though it impacted local congregations in the region. However, the targeting of evangelical pastors by both *Sendero* and state security forces prompted a major discussion within the *Concilio Nacional Evangélico del Peru* (CONEP, National Evangelical Council of Peru), a group founded in 1940 to promote dialogue among different evangelical churches in the country. A public statement issued on January 23, 1983, read in part:

*Violence is reaching untenable levels ... we recognize that the situation occurring in the south central part of the country grows out of socio-economic conditions that have not been addressed ... We express our concern for human rights in our country. Daily we are informed about excesses committed by diverse sectors that fly in the face of human dignity.*¹³

The assassination of seven evangelical pastors by a marine infantry patrol while they were in a prayer meeting prompted further action. In 1984, CONEP formed the *Servicio de Paz y Esperanza* (Committee for Peace and Hope) to provide social assistance to evangelicals in zones where the violence was the worst, assist those displaced by the violence, and carry out human rights-related education and other activities. It also began providing legal defense to victims of human rights violations and their families.

Notably, the one type of organization that did develop in the emergency zones was groups of *familiares* (family members) of

Groups of family members of the disappeared – mostly poor, rural peasants – were formed in Ayacucho and the other emergency zones.



Family members of the disappeared, working with the organization ANFASEP, protest human rights violations in the emergency zones.

the disappeared, whose ranks were growing. They emerged from one of the most marginalized and discriminated against sectors of the population. Most *familiares* were poor, rural peasants from Ayacucho and the other emergency zones. Most did not know the fate of their loved ones. Their common objective was to locate their disappeared family members, be they dead or alive. Yet, the simple fact that some of those disappeared were connected to the guerrillas was often used to discredit them.

In September 1983, they organized the *Comité de Familiares de Desaparecidos*, now called the *Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos en Zonas de Emergencia* (ANFASEP, National Association of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared in Emergency Zones). ANFASEP served a variety of purposes for its members. First and foremost, it was a mutual support network for those who had experienced extreme loss combined with the uncertainty of not knowing what had happened to their family members. ANFASEP was also a space to share information. One woman recalled, “There they told us where bodies had been found and with this information we went out to look for the bodies, in search of our family members.”¹⁴ And, it was a place for developing strategies for demanding action, whether via collective

denunciations, meetings with local authorities, marches or other protests.

A second group of *familiares* was organized a year after ANFASEP specifically for relatives of the disappeared who lived in Lima. Because of its location in the capital, the *Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos* (COFADER, Committee of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared) had more direct and sustained contact with state authorities and sympathetic members of Congress. It was also better positioned to work with the progressive Catholic Church more broadly, and with CEAS specifically.¹⁵ However, the existence of two main groups of *familiares* did sometimes spur rivalries, and coordination between the two was difficult. Both groups were inspired by and received support from the *Federación Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Detenidos-Desaparecidos* (FEDEFAM, Latin American Federation of Associations of Detained-Disappeared).

A defining moment for the human rights movement in Ayacucho – and in the nation as a whole – was the 1983 Uchuraccay massacre. Eight journalists were summarily executed by townspeople with the knowledge, approval, and encouragement of the military. After the massacre, family members of the victims joined together to form the *Comité de Familiares “Mártires de Uchuraccay”* (“Martyrs of Uchuraccay” Committee of Family Members) to try to learn the truth about what had happened and to bring those responsible to justice. The family members denounced what had happened throughout Peru and on trips to the United States and Europe. They were able to mobilize the solidarity of human rights groups, professional and social organizations, political parties, congresspersons, leaders of the Catholic Church and lawyers.

One year after the massacre, the *Comité de Solidaridad “Mártires de Uchuraccay”* (“Martyrs of Uchuraccay” Solidarity Committee) was formed to support the

family members of the Uchuraccay massacre victims, and to seek justice in this and other cases of human rights atrocities. A coalition, the solidarity committee included CEAS, APRODEH, COMISEDH and the *Confederación Campesina del Peru* (CCP, Peasant Confederation of Peru). Although the solidarity committee had a limited lifespan, it was yet another significant experience of working in coalition and, as such, a precursor of the *Coordinadora*.

The 1985 Encuentro and the creation of the *Coordinadora*

By 1984, momentum for the creation of a unified human rights movement was growing. Human rights groups were increasingly overwhelmed by the atrocities committed on all sides. They felt they had had little impact in curbing violations. It was time to employ new strategies and tactics.

The Peruvian human rights movement was also confronted with the real problem of determining which groups had ties to *Sendero*. As small human rights groups proliferated around the country, it was increasingly difficult to know the political motivations of their founders. Yet, as the human rights crisis worsened, it was imperative to know the origin and loyalties of every group. The size of the country made this challenging. More formal organizational structures were needed to facilitate communication and the interchange of information within the movement.

There was also growing concern regarding the ability of the progressive Catholic Church to continue to convene the human rights community. By the mid-1980s, more conservative sectors within the church had begun to assert themselves. Within CEAS, there was concern that changes in the church hierarchy would inhibit it from continuing to operate as it had in the past. Its staff was often forced to take a more cautious approach. The human rights community felt the need to create a space for groups to come together that was independent of both the church and left-wing politics.



COORDINADORA NACIONAL DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DEL PERU

The mid-1980s was also a period of convergence and unity for grassroots social sectors in Peru more broadly. Having fared poorly in the 1980 presidential elections, left-wing parties and activists united under the *Izquierda Unida* (IU, United Left) banner and won key elections. For many, IU was the purveyor of progressive reform. Cooperative social service, employment generation and other development projects were implemented in collaboration with local NGOs and progressive municipal governments. For a time, political differences within the legal left were sidelined as these new initiatives went forward.

There was a clear convergence of interests between progressive sectors of the Church and the left. In short, the unity provided by IU created a propitious environment for coalition-building. The *Coordinadora* was created within the context of relative unity and cohesion among progressive forces in Peru.

By this time, the human rights community had several experiences of collaborative efforts to build upon. In many of these efforts, three Lima-based groups – CEAS, COMISEDH and APRODEH – had worked together. However, much of the impetus for a national meeting came from

Family members of the disappeared, working with the organization COFADER, protest human rights violations in Lima.

The *Encuentro*, held in January 1985, was attended by 107 people representing over fifty organizations. The *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú* was formed at this meeting.

the provinces. Invoking a sense of urgency, CODEHs – among them CODEH-Puno and CODEH-Ica – and groups of *familiares* called on the Lima-based human rights groups to plan a national *encuentro* (meeting) of Peru’s human rights movement. Subsequently, a letter of invitation to the *Encuentro* was signed by nine organizations, among them traditional human rights NGOs, groups of *familiares* and grassroots organizations.¹⁶

The letter condemned violence by all sides of the conflict and laid out three objectives for the *Encuentro*: (1) to coordinate the efforts of different human rights groups, (2) to analyze the economic, social and political situation with regard to human rights, and (3) to approve a plan for a national and international campaign in defense of life. Participants would craft a joint declaration about the human rights situation in Peru.¹⁷

The *Encuentro*, held in January 1985, was attended by 107 people representing over fifty organizations. During the *Encuentro*, heated discussion took place between various representatives or sympathizers of *Sendero* and others from within the human rights community. At one point, in an impassioned speech, Marta Huatay from the *Asociación de Abogados Democráticos* (Association of Democratic Lawyers) accused the *Encuentro* organizers of being “conciliators,” and of abandoning the “rights of the people” in favor of “human rights.” She and others tried in vain to remove references condemning violence by guerrilla groups from the draft of the declaration under consideration.¹⁸ When other participants held firm in their convictions, the *Sendero*-oriented faction walked out of the gathering.

The *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú* was formed at the *Encuentro*. Its stated purpose was “to coordinate and support the work in defense of human rights undertaken by organizations at the national level.”¹⁹ All of the organizations that attended the *Encuentro* and remained through the end

of the meeting became members of the *Coordinadora*.

Thirteen members were elected to the Executive Committee to share responsibility for carrying out the *Coordinadora*’s mandate. To cover minimal operating expenses, all *Coordinadora* member organizations paid monthly dues. Executive Committee members paid a higher quota. CEAS, APRODEH and COMISEDH were tasked to see that the Executive Committee functioned. Its monthly meetings rotated between these three offices.

Initially, the *Coordinadora*’s diverse membership afforded it a broad base of grassroots support, and made it more representative. However, that same diversity made consensus building more difficult. In addition, many grassroots organizations were not able to commit time or resources to the *Coordinadora* and ultimately dropped out. This was the case with the CCP. By the late 1980s, the *Coordinadora* membership consisted almost exclusively of organizations with a straight forward human rights mandate, although it maintained a combination of faith-based and secular NGOs.

The García government

One of the first acts undertaken by the newly formed *Coordinadora* was an initiative to insert human rights issues into the political debate surrounding the 1985 presidential elections. In April 1985, the *Coordinadora* published an open letter to all presidential candidates, calling on each one to make a pronouncement prior to the voting on proposed policies to deal with the complex problem of political violence and human rights.²⁰

While few of the candidates complied with the *Coordinadora*’s request for specific policy proposals, the ultimate winner of the presidential race, Alan García, did use rhetoric supportive of the human rights cause. Initially, the *Coordinadora* gave García the benefit of the doubt, hopeful that the Peace Commission that he had set up to seek a democratic solution to the

problem of political violence would lead to concrete results. A representative group of six commissioners was installed in September 1985, and the *Coordinadora* was designated as an official “advisory group.” Within a few months, the Peace Commission presented a series of legislative and other proposals that were endorsed by the human rights community.

Disappointingly, however, the commission’s efforts were undermined by the García government’s unwillingness to move forward on any of its recommendations. By the beginning of 1986, four of six commissioners had resigned after concluding that “the commission’s ability to act was proportionally equivalent to the political will of the president to produce changes in the human rights sphere.”²¹ The Peace Commission was never able to realize the lofty goal for which it was created.

The *Coordinadora*’s hopes of having an ally in the presidential palace were short-lived. García abandoned his initial commitment to protecting human rights and adopted the hard-line approach he had earlier disavowed. In 1988, Human Rights Watch/Americas reported that “the government’s tolerance of gross abuses of human rights is more and more apparent.”²²

The emergence of the *Comando Rodrigo Franco* (CRF),²³ a death squad that reportedly operated out of the Ministry of the Interior, further implicated the García government in widespread human rights violations. A CRF communiqué, released on July 28, 1988, announced that “for each mayor, soldier or policeman murdered, a *Sendero* leader or a leader of the groups that support and protect *Sendero* will die.”²⁴ It quickly became imminently clear that “the groups that support” *Sendero* included many with no ties to the guerrillas whatsoever. In 1989, murders of eleven prominent individuals, including two members of Congress, were attributed to the CRF.²⁵ The paramilitary CRF became a major source of threats against the human rights community.

Despite the ruthless tactics that continued to be employed, the counterinsurgency strategy of the García government failed to stem the insurgency. Political violence continued to escalate as *Sendero*’s presence grew throughout the country, and the government further expanded the areas covered by the state of emergency.²⁶ The war was no longer confined to the countryside. Its primary victims were no longer peasants. By the end of the decade, a congressional commission on political violence, headed by Senator Enrique Bernaldes, had registered over 19,000 Peruvians killed as a result of the conflict.²⁷ The vast majority were civilians.

Caught in the crossfire

Like much of Peru’s peasant population, the human rights movement found itself caught in the crossfire between a brutal military and equally brutal guerrilla forces. Political violence was unleashed with such ferocity that the human rights community was forced to operate in a constant crisis mode. Over time, *Sendero* increasingly targeted grassroots and popular leaders and stepped up its harassment of the human rights community. Scores of popular leaders were killed each year by its “liquidation squads,” and it routinely sent death threats to local human rights groups.

Sendero’s modus operandi was to infiltrate local groups with the intention of eventually controlling them. People known to be affiliated with *Sendero* would attend human rights activities as the eyes and ears of the party. Their mere presence was threatening to all those participating because, like the armed forces, *Sendero* made clear its willingness to target anyone who it perceived as “opposition.”

The terrorist tactics employed by *Sendero*, and its unabashed targeting of grassroots and left-wing activists and the human rights community, set it apart from other revolutionary movements in Latin America and greatly limited its capacity to garner popular support. Carlos Basombrío observed that:

As one of its first acts, the *Coordinadora* published an open letter to all presidential candidates in the 1985 elections, calling on each to make a pronouncement on proposed human rights policies.

On July 20, 1989, Teodoro Manrique España and Angel Escobar Jurado from the CODEH-Huancavelica sent a letter to the Coordinadora in Lima. It read in part:

[W]e have the pressing need to communicate to you that we have learned of the existence of a list of approximately 122 persons in this city, among them we the undersigned, as well as leaders of popular organizations and citizens that support peace and progress; to be assassinated by the self-named "Comando Rodrigo Franco." For this reason we request that you do what you can in this case to avoid such a genocide occurring.

At the time, CODEH-Huancavelica was one of the most active local CODEHs and Angel Escobar participated regularly in Coordinadora activities. Several months later, on February 7, 1990, Escobar called APRODEH to say that he had documentation on new cases of disappearances that had occurred in the region and that he was traveling to Lima immediately.²⁹ That very day, before he was able to leave Huancavelica, five men in civilian clothes, believed to be members of the CRF, kidnapped Escobar. He was never seen again.

Since 1991, the Coordinadora has awarded an annual "Angel Escobar Jurado" National Human Rights Prize.

For the first time in the region, an insurgent force on the left developed a systematic practice of violence against the civilian population that matched, and perhaps surpassed, state-sponsored violence. Shining Path's profound disregard for human life, its contempt – in both theory and practice – for the discourse of human rights, and its refusal to ascribe to the norms and principles of international humanitarian law rendered it unique on the continent.²⁸

Fear permeated the human rights movement across the country, with particular intensity in the areas hardest hit by the violence. In the face of extreme violence by both sides in the conflict, the space to carry out human rights work narrowed and closed in some parts of the country. In some places, human rights work was forced underground.

In places where human rights work did continue, activities were evaluated on an ongoing basis to assess the risks involved and the forces likely to be present. The reality of violence relegated much human rights work to Lima, far from the rural peasants who made up the vast majority of the victims. For security reasons, the locus of the denunciatory work also shifted from Ayacucho and the emergency zones to the capital.

This alarming situation, and the accompanying fear and stress, took its toll on the human rights community. Those in the countryside, at most risk, struggled valiantly to maintain minimal human rights work. As the number of *familiares* grew by leaps and bounds, groups scrambled to try to meet their needs in a polarized situation with limited resources.

These challenging circumstances sometimes strained relations between *Coordinadora* members. Groups in the provinces, particularly groups of *familiares*, felt marginalized and out of touch with activities taking place in the capital, yet they relied more and more on Lima-based organizations for assistance. Given these

dynamics and the vast cultural differences and physical distance between Lima and many other parts of the country, it is a testament to the political will of those involved in the *Coordinadora* that a functioning coalition was maintained.

Human Rights Education

At this time, work in the area of human rights education began to expand. Human rights education was viewed as a strategy for counteracting the prevailing attitude in much of the countryside that human rights abuses by soldiers or police were normal.

A range of human rights and other groups were engaged in human rights education, including the *Instituto Peruano de Educación en Derechos Humanos y la Paz* (IPEDEHP, Peruvian Institute for Human Rights and Peace Education). The initial focus of IPEDEHP was to train public school teachers to incorporate human rights and democracy issues into the standard curriculum. IPEDEHP developed curriculum material that introduced human rights concepts within different subject matters, and trained teachers to use it.

The existence of the *Coordinadora* facilitated collegial work in the area of human rights education. In 1987 *Coordinadora* member organizations involved in human rights education came together to form the *Red Peruana de Educación en Derechos Humanos* (Peruvian Network for Human Rights Education). The *Red* functions as the educational arm of the *Coordinadora* and eventually was formally listed as a working group within the coalition. It has a decentralized structure and responsibility for its coordination is rotated among its participating organizations. It is divided into regional groups, each of which has its own work plan.

More than eighty church-based and educational NGOs belong to the *Red*. Some are members of the *Coordinadora* and others are not. The diverse membership of the *Red* allows it to reach beyond the traditional human rights constituency. It has an

organizational culture distinct from that of the *Coordinadora*. The existence of the *Red* enables a variety of groups involved in human rights education to share materials and methodologies, coordinate efforts and undertake joint initiatives. Members of the *Red* share a common approach to human rights education that is bottom-up, participatory, and designed to help build the capacity of local organizations.

The *Coordinadora's* institutional evolution

From its founding in 1985 until the end of the decade was a period of institutional evolution and consolidation for the *Coordinadora*. From 1985 to 1987, the four work areas of the *Coordinadora* were information exchange, joint actions, joint communiqués, and collective responses to government policies.³⁰ Members of the Executive Committee were to implement activities decided upon in its monthly meetings. Most of the tasks fell to APRODEH, CEAS and COMISEDH, which also provided the bulk of the resources for the *Coordinadora's* operating costs. There was no office, and no central mailing address or telephone number. Despite the presence of groups from the provinces on the Executive Committee, day-to-day reality made it difficult for them to follow through on decisions that were made, or to participate in campaigns organized out of Lima. '

As the date for the second *Encuentro* of the *Coordinadora* membership approached in mid-1987, frank discussions took place about what the coalition had accomplished in its first two years of existence. While everyone agreed that there was strength in unity, the *Coordinadora* was functioning sporadically and had limited capacity for follow-through. People from the provinces would travel for Executive Committee meetings only to be frustrated when those from Lima did not show up. Many actions agreed upon in the Executive Committee were never implemented. Some felt that the *Coordinadora* existed in name only.

Consensus was easily reached that, for the *Coordinadora* to function as its members



Angelica Mendoza, founder and director of ANFASEP, receiving the "Angel Escobar Jurado" National Human Rights Prize.

desired, it had to have an office with a staff capable of implementing the decisions reached by the Executive Committee. The proposal to create a Permanent Secretariat was officially adopted at the 1987 *Encuentro*. The Permanent Secretariat (with guidance from the Executive Committee) was tasked to execute the work plan for the coalition that was approved by all member organizations at the bi-annual *Encuentro*. The Permanent Secretariat also represented the *Coordinadora* when appropriate, called meetings of the Executive Committee, made sure that the members of the Executive Committee carried out the tasks assigned to them, and managed the coalition's finances.

The search began for an Executive Secretary to head up the office, to be approved unanimously by the Executive Committee. Consensus quickly emerged around an ideal candidate, a Spanish lay missionary named Pilar Coll who had worked at both the grassroots and the national level and had been active in the human rights movement for years. Everyone had confidence in her and respected both the quality and style of her work. Politically savvy, Coll was seen as someone who was ready to take on a high public profile in order to achieve the *Coordinadora's*

The diverse membership of the Peruvian Network for Human Rights Education allows it to reach beyond the traditional human rights constituency.



Family members carry pictures of disappeared relatives in protest.

The focus on specific activities or campaigns became institutionalized as the modus operandi for the *Coordinadora's* work.

objectives, but not to seek personal attention – a factor which calmed the fears of those who did not want the coalition to take on a higher profile than its individual member organizations. Coll began working for the *Coordinadora* in March 1988.

The *Coordinadora's* 1988 work plan prioritized two major activities: a campaign for the detained-disappeared, and a major cultural event to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The centerpiece of the campaign for the detained-disappeared was the distribution of educational materials and a nationwide petition calling for government action. Surpassing expectations, more than 50,000 signatures were collected and presented to the García government. The issue of the detained-disappeared was also highlighted at the December 1988 event to commemorate the Universal Declaration.

The success of these activities greatly increased the *Coordinadora's* public visibility. The focus on specific activities or campaigns became institutionalized as the modus operandi for the *Coordinadora's* work.

By this time, the *Coordinadora* was creating a paper trail. In addition to periodic press releases and letters to government officials, the first annual report on human rights practices was prepared in 1989. Annual

reports have become an important mechanism for centralizing documentation on human rights violations and disseminating information to key actors at home and abroad. The annual statistics provided in the report were accepted as accurate and used worldwide. The report, which is endorsed by all *Coordinadora* members, continues to be published annually.

Also in 1989, the *Coordinadora* launched another publication. The bi-monthly *Carta Circular* served as a means of internal communication for the coalition's membership.

In 1989, the *Coordinadora* joined forces with other civil society actors to organize a national network, *Perú Vida y Paz* (Peru Life and Peace), that was broad-based and nonpartisan. *Perú Vida y Paz* was intended to be “an ethical movement, a place for people to express their moral indignation over the direction that the country was going.”³¹ Comprised of about 300 loosely connected “local initiative groups,” it was oriented towards promoting mobilizations for peace by organizations around the country.

Perú Vida y Paz's efforts to promote a culture of peace and to create a new language for talking about peace and human rights provided valuable experience for those who participated from the human rights community. A range of innovative and creative activities were designed and implemented that proved effective in reaching broad sectors of Peruvian society. Many of these – including street theater, art exhibitions, and participation of local artists and performers in demonstrations – were later incorporated by the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations into human rights activities. The promotion of peace was a central element of the work of the *Coordinadora* member organizations throughout the period of intense political violence.

Fujimori's first government

By the presidential elections in 1990 Peruvian politics had taken a sharp turn. The economy took a nosedive, while

political violence continued to escalate. There were over 3,000 political killings in 1989, and the annual death count remained at that level for the next several years. Sendero surpassed the security forces, with responsibility for over half of the political killings, and with innocent civilians comprising most of the victims. Peruvians were desperate and increasingly willing to support hard-line measures to solve the country's deep political and economic crisis. Independent presidential candidate Alberto Fujimori exploited this sentiment and capitalized on most Peruvians' distrust of political elites, winning handily in the second round of voting.

Although Fujimori had emphasized a populist platform during the campaign, within weeks of taking office, he implemented a sweeping structural adjustment program that swelled the ranks of impoverished Peruvians. He did a similar about-face on the human rights front. In his inaugural speech Fujimori emphatically stated that "The unrestricted respect and promotion of human rights will be a firm line of action by my government."³² That promise was quickly forgotten. Within months, his government's attitude toward the human rights community became openly hostile. In November 1990, then-Minister of Justice Augusto Antonoli proclaimed the need to "avoid the obstruction of police and military actions by human rights organizations in zones affected by subversion."³³

As the Fujimori government's authoritarian tendencies became more evident, the relationship between the human rights community and the State became increasingly more adversarial. While human rights groups in the provinces remained most at risk, for the first time well-known, Lima-based organizations – CAJ, AI, and COMISEDH – were subjected to paramilitary-style operations.

During Fujimori's first year in office, 224 Peruvians were disappeared at the hands



COORDINADORA NACIONAL DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DEL PERU

A street festival promoted by Perú Vida y Paz.

of state agents. Extra-judicial executions began to rise and the areas of the country declared to be in a state of emergency were expanded to include fifty-six percent of the population.³⁴

The situation reached a breaking point in mid-1991 when, in a speech before the commanding officers of the armed forces, Fujimori referred to human rights groups as "useful fools" of terrorist groups, "that will be unmasked." This was both insulting and dangerous in the context of the military's counterinsurgency campaign, where anyone seen as aiding subversives was considered a legitimate target.

The *Coordinadora* developed a four-point strategy to attempt to counteract the government's statements. First, an open letter to the president was published in newspapers in Lima. Second, well-known and respected Peruvians signed a statement in support of the human rights community. Third, foreign embassies were made aware of the *Coordinadora's* positions and asked for their support. Finally, requests for protective measures were presented at the Organization of American States (OAS) and an alert – or report – was sent to the United Nations (UN).

In April 1992, Fujimori took the unprecedented step of suspending the

During their first three years of operation, the military courts had a ninety-five to ninety-seven percent conviction rate.

By the end of the decade, an estimated 22,000 Peruvians had been unjustly detained as a result of the anti-terrorism legislation.

constitution, dissolving Congress, and temporarily closing the judiciary. The *autogolpe*, as it came to be known, solidified the military's iron-fist approach and continued impunity. Draconian legislation, decreed by the president shortly thereafter, created military courts to try those accused of "treason" and certain forms of terrorism as well as "faceless" civilian courts³⁵ to try those accused of terrorism. During their first three years of operation, the military courts had a ninety-five to ninety-seven percent conviction rate.³⁶

The new laws blatantly violated international norms and standards, removing safeguards for defendants. One was presumed guilty until proven innocent. The definitions of what constituted "treason" and "terrorism" were disturbingly broad. *Habeas corpus* petitions were eliminated. The most basic due process guarantees were eliminated, including the right to an adequate defense. Trials were held in secret, people could be tried *in absentia*, defendants had no access to the evidence presented against them, cross-examination of witnesses was prohibited, and defense lawyers were often notified just hours before a trial began. Lawyers were prohibited from taking on more than one case at a time, a measure that caused chaos because the pool of accused was far bigger than the number of lawyers willing and able to work on such cases. Sentences were disturbingly harsh. The number of people detained on terrorism and treason charges skyrocketed. By the end of the decade, an estimated 22,000 Peruvians had been unjustly detained as a result of the anti-terrorism legislation.³⁷

Following the *autogolpe*, *Sendero* stepped up its activities in major cities, especially Lima. It used massive truck bombs as a new instrument of terror. In the three months after the *autogolpe* sixty people were killed in these attacks alone.³⁸

The authoritarianism found on both sides of the conflict underscored the need to promote democratic alternatives. As a result, the *Coordinadora's* discourse

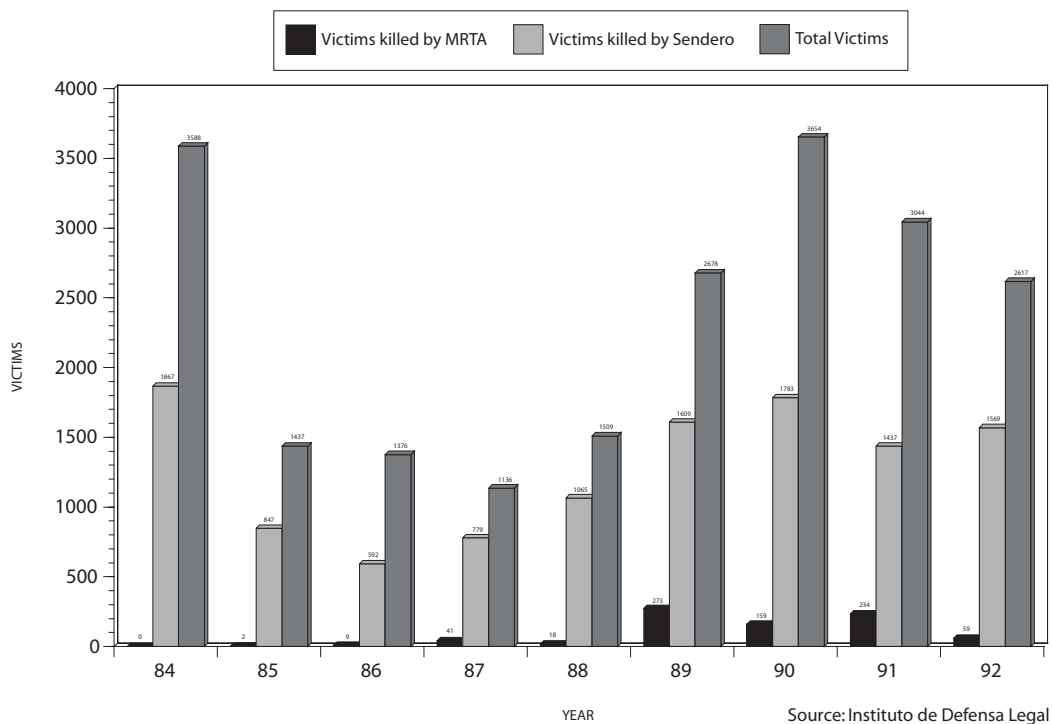
was increasingly oriented towards defending democratic principles as well as human rights.

The bulk of the Peruvian population, however, bought into Fujimori's argument that the *autogolpe* and his strong-arm tactics were necessary because of the threat of terrorist violence and because the State had become so ineffective that it had to be dismantled and rebuilt anew. The international community, on the other hand, was deeply concerned. The U.S. government suspended non-humanitarian aid (with the notable exception of anti-drug aid) and played an important role in organizing opposition to the *autogolpe* from Peru's major donors and the OAS. The OAS member states invoked Resolution 1080 and pressured for a return to constitutional rule in Peru. Ultimately, Fujimori had little choice but to agree to hold elections for a new Congress tasked with writing a new constitution. He managed to placate the international community while setting the terms for the elections that ensured a Congress and constitution very much to his liking that served to further consolidate his power as president.

Peruvian history took yet another dramatic turn in September 1992. Abimael Guzmán, the messianic leader worshipped by the *Sendero* guerrilla's, was captured and his unshaven, forlorn image broadcast across the nation. This led to a precipitous drop in acts of violence by *Sendero*, and, ultimately, to the guerrilla movement's near-demise. It also provided Fujimori with a justification for his strong-arm tactics and boosted his popularity temporarily.

The drop in *Sendero* violence led to dramatic decreases in state-sponsored human rights violations. By the mid-1990s, Peru's human rights crisis had come to an end; however, in its wake came a deep crisis of democratic institutions. The authoritarian nature of the Fujimori regime increased proportionally to the decline in the levels of violence.

Politically Motivated Killings by Sendero and MRTA vs. Totals



The *Coordinadora* consistently called on all sides of the conflict to respect international human rights norms and standards.

Documenting guerrilla abuses

During the first years of the Fujimori government, the *Coordinadora* work plans continued to emphasize disappearances and support for *familiares*, the overall situation in the emergency zones, torture, and the problem of impunity.

In 1990, a three-day session of the *Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos “Contra la Impunidad en América Latina”* (The People’s Permanent Tribunal Against Impunity in Latin America) was held in Peru. The *Tribunal* was a mechanism for citizens to denounce violations of basic rights. The *Coordinadora* organized the “trial” as an activity designed to confront the problem of impunity. In addition to charges against the Peruvian State, *Sendero* and the MRTA were also charged with violating international humanitarian law. Family members of victims of violence testified as did representatives of organizations targeted by armed actors. Some human rights lawyers argued the case against the State and the guerrilla groups, while others assumed the defense

of the accused. A panel of five judges concluded that “the facts that have been denounced constitute crimes against humanity that are covered up by impunity mechanisms that operate to impede the sanction of those responsible.”³⁹

As it had from its inception, throughout this period the *Coordinadora* consistently called on all sides of the conflict to respect international human rights norms and standards. However, international human rights law focuses on state responsibility and does not contemplate actions committed by non-state actors like *Sendero*. Technically, only governments can commit human rights violations. Given that *Sendero* had replaced the security forces in the number of killings committed annually, this legal distinction rang empty for Peruvians, most of them innocent civilians, who were victimized by the insurgents.

As *Sendero*’s terrorist-type actions targeting civilian populations increased, debate heated up about the application of international



A visit to Tocache to collect testimony of human rights abuses.

The first high-level Clinton administration delegation to visit Peru in January 1994 met with the *Coordinadora* before meetings with Peruvian government officials.

humanitarian law. Non-state actors – such as *Sendero* – can be condemned for violations of international humanitarian law, developed to help protect the rights of civilians during times of war. However, the concept of “humanizing the war” did not fit the particularity of the conflict in Peru. The Peruvian human rights movement “broke with the idea of neutrality, or intent merely to humanize conflicts ... we felt solidarity with civil society’s desire to defeat the Shining Path and we supported legitimate efforts by the state to accomplish this goal.”⁴⁰

In stark contrast to other human rights movements in Latin America, the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations adopted a position of documenting violations of international humanitarian law by the insurgents. Moreover, it adopted the position that in cases where an individual’s life was in danger, such as extrajudicial executions or disappearances, *all* victims and their family members would be supported. However, in the case of detentions, they sought to protect and support *innocent* victims. In the anti-terrorist courts, for example, *Coordinadora* members would only provide legal defense in cases in which the available evidence indicated that the accused was innocent.

The *Coordinadora*’s policy was that human rights lawyers from its member

organizations would assist people connected to guerrilla movements, if called upon, during the initial period of detention in order to help prevent the disappearance, extra-judicial execution or torture of these individuals. The lawyers would not, however, assume their legal defense. While they were not often called upon to do so – both *Sendero* and the MRTA had their own networks of lawyers for such cases – the policy was questioned by some outside of the Peruvian context.

Coordinadora activities

Survivors of the violence and the family members of victims flooded the offices of the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations. More and more victims of the violence and their family members needed assistance. Many of these individuals were in hiding for fear of their lives. The *Coordinadora* utilized its national network to help relocate people or, in particularly serious cases, assist them in fleeing to Bolivia or Chile or in seeking political asylum in Europe. The ongoing human rights crisis and the expressed desire of donors to fund direct assistance led the coalition to establish a humanitarian assistance fund for victims of political violence. A committee evaluated requests for assistance. Another rotating solidarity fund was set up to provide loans (up to US\$1,000) to those recently released from jail to allow them to set up small businesses.

In addition to humanitarian assistance, a network of professionals – social workers, psychologists, doctors and dentists – was organized to provide direct services to those in need. Working on a volunteer basis, the professionals became part of a working group on humanitarian aid. A group of volunteer psychologists, operating out of the *Coordinadora* office, began providing therapy to individuals and groups of people who were victims of violence.

From a human rights standpoint, two crucial issues came to the fore in the debate over the new constitution of October 1993. On the negative side, the

constitution allowed for the application of the death penalty for those convicted of treason or terrorism. On the positive side, the constitution mandated the creation of a human rights ombudsman's Office, an autonomous state organ mandated to assure the protection of the basic human rights of Peruvian citizens. The *Coordinadora* organized campaigns around both of these issues.

Although a clause allowing the death penalty was incorporated into the final draft of the constitution, implementing legislation was never put forward because of advocacy efforts by the human rights community. The *Coordinadora* took the issue to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights which issued a consultative opinion concurring that ratification of the death penalty is incompatible with the American Convention on Human Rights, of which the Peruvian government is a signatory.

The *Coordinadora* supported the establishment of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office as mandated in the 1993 constitution. The coalition pushed the Congress to adopt implementing legislation, but it was not until September 1996 that the office began functioning with Dr. Jorge Santistevan de Noriega, a former high-ranking UN official, at the helm. The *Coordinadora* worked closely with Santistevan and his staff during his tenure in office.

As the Peruvian situation worsened, more and more foreign delegations arrived. In one symbolic case, the first high-level Clinton administration delegation to visit Peru in January 1994 met with the *Coordinadora* before meetings with Peruvian government officials.⁴¹ Although each delegation brought important support and opportunities to lobby the government, they also demanded time and energy on the part of human rights leaders. In addition, the *Coordinadora* now sent its own delegates to the UN and the OAS on a regular basis, which necessitated preparation of both general information and case-specific reports.

Internal Dynamics

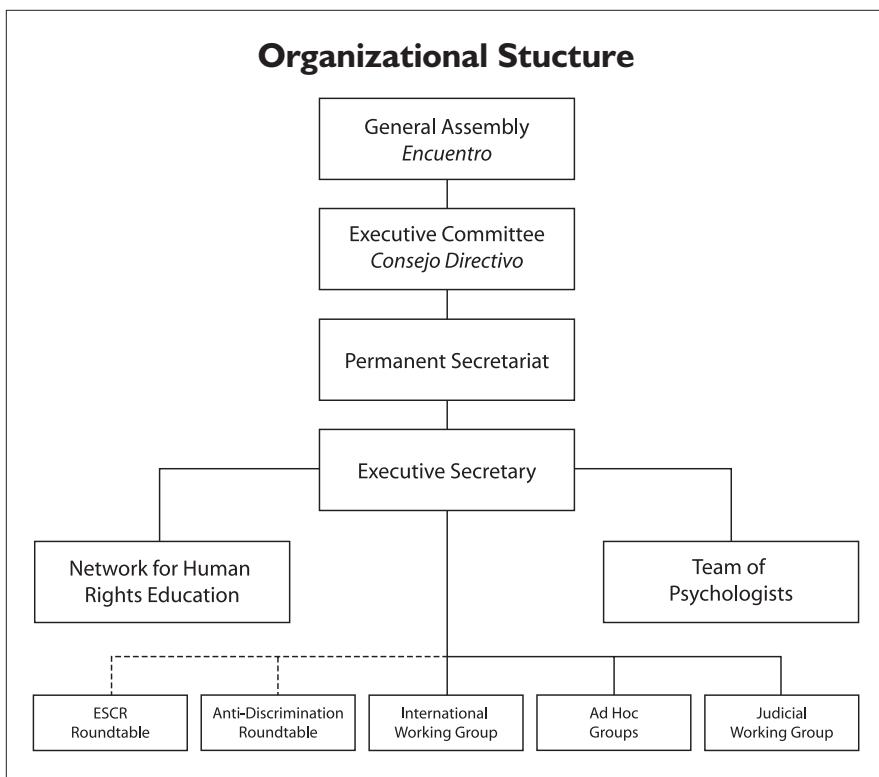
As the coalition grew, the Executive Committee decided to formalize the institution. In 1991 it registered the *Coordinadora* with the Peruvian government as a non-profit organization. Formal procedures and criteria were stipulated for becoming a member of the coalition. After assuming the position of Executive Secretary in 1993, Rosa María Mujica carried out an extensive process to review the roster and formally re-inscribe member organizations in order to clarify the actual membership of the coalition. The name of the Executive Committee was also changed to the *Consejo Directivo* (Executive Council).

During this period, a Permanent Committee, with rotating membership of Lima-based organizations, was formally established within the *Coordinadora*. The purpose was to allow for a more agile consultation and decision-making process than that provided by the *Consejo Directivo*. Somewhat controversial, the Permanent Committee gave more power to the large human rights NGOs in Lima. Moreover, despite its decision-making capacity, for many years it was not incorporated into the *Coordinadora's* formal structure.⁴² These criticisms notwithstanding, as the decade wore on, the Permanent Committee became essential in responding to the almost daily political crises that erupted as the Fujimori regime sought to perpetuate itself in power.

The bi-annual *Encuentros* of all *Coordinadora* member organizations were also institutionalized, with a set agenda. First, the member organizations would do a joint assessment in four areas: the political situation, violence, democracy and human rights. Outside experts were selected to address certain issues, which would then be discussed in both working groups and plenary sessions. Second, the participants would define strategic work areas for the next two years, specifying the major activities to be undertaken over that period. Finally, organizations soliciting

Working groups serve multiple purposes within the *Coordinadora*. They increase the productive capacity of the coalition, promote a sense of unity and, in some cases, facilitate increased participation by groups outside of Lima.

Organizational Structure



membership in the *Coordinadora* would be reviewed and approved, and a new *Consejo Directivo* elected.

Importance of working groups

Working groups serve multiple purposes within the *Coordinadora*. They increase the productive capacity of the coalition, promote a sense of unity and, in some cases, facilitate increased participation by groups outside of Lima. The first one established by the *Coordinadora*, the Working Group against Detention-Disappearance and Political Assassination, is a good example of this. It helped consolidate information, enabling the *Coordinadora* to present combined statistics on disappearances and extra-judicial executions. It produced a widely circulated bulletin that documented acts committed by military and police forces, paramilitaries and guerrilla organizations, which was translated and published in three other languages. The working group also developed proposals for legislation and judicial reforms designed to help decrease the number of disappearances, including creation of a national registry of detainees. Finally, it was responsible for coordinating

the *Coordinadora's* efforts before the UN and the OAS.

In February 1993, a concerted effort was made to strengthen working groups within the *Coordinadora*. The following working groups were recognized: information, dissemination, press, international work and judicial. Later, in 1995, there was a decision to ensure the participation of organizations from the provinces in all working groups.

The existence of the working groups gave a greater sense of professionalism to the coalition's work. Nowhere was this clearer than in the *Grupo Jurídico* (Judicial Group).

The *Grupo Jurídico* helped human rights lawyers respond effectively to the profound changes their work underwent following the *autogolpe*. Before the *autogolpe*, human rights lawyers rarely engaged in litigation; human rights almost never cases went to trial, so there was little opportunity for litigation. Lawyers focused on denouncing atrocities, gathering evidence and badgering officials. They did provide legal defense to some detainees. However, the anti-terrorism decrees put in place after the *autogolpe* led to a significant increase in the number of people detained on terrorism charges and also imposed a limitation of only one case per lawyer. Hence, all lawyers were needed to litigate cases.

The *Grupo Jurídico* is the only working group with a national presence and annual national meetings. It is divided into regional groups that meet periodically to develop regional advocacy strategies. The regional and national meetings are an important training ground for human rights legal work. This training has increased the *Coordinadora's* institutional capacity to analyze existing laws and propose human rights-related legislation.

Legislative initiatives undertaken by the *Grupo Jurídico* had some success, despite the climate of authoritarianism. Though insufficient, some modifications were made to the anti-terrorist legislation. Eventually

the Fujimori administration eliminated the “faceless” nature of the civilian and military courts, making judges’ identities public. The prison conditions for those convicted of terrorism or treason were relaxed somewhat: for example, mothers were allowed to see their children every month instead of every three months. Also, as the result of a *Coordinadora* initiative, the Congress raised the age at which an individual could be convicted as an adult to eighteen years.

The bulletin, *Tuyos, Míos, Nuestros*, started in 1993 and was the responsibility of the Dissemination working group. Developed as a popular education tool, people – such as students and homemakers – who were not familiar with human rights were its intended audience. Initially, it was distributed through NGOs and schools, as well as by groups of volunteers who took it door-to-door. Later, it was also distributed via the *La República* daily newspaper.

Consolidation of authoritarian rule

In 1995, congressional and presidential elections were held – elections that helped to consolidate the Fujimori/Montesinos regime’s authoritarian project. Fujimori ran for a second term in office and won handily.

International condemnation of anti-democratic practices in Peru following the *autogolpe* fell off after the 1995 elections. Fujimori sought to maintain the formal trappings of democracy, while concentrating power in the hands of the executive branch. Fujimori relied on his right-hand man Montesinos, the *Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional* (National Intelligence Service, SIN) and the military high command to move forward an authoritarian project. Steady setbacks to democratic consolidation and the rule of law meant that the fundamental guarantees needed to ensure respect for and protection human rights and democratic practices were more distant than ever.

The SIN grew under the tutelage of Montesinos and became Peru’s political police. It was charged with stifling political

opposition, independent reporting and other perceived threats to the government. The means by which it did this – harassment and intimidation, death threats and blackmail – resembled some of the worst features of a totalitarian regime.

The nature of the threats faced by the *Coordinadora* and other civil society organizations changed in this new context. As the government sought to eliminate dissent and discredit those viewed as political enemies, new forms of harassment emerged, intended to impede the work of human rights activists, and intimidate them. Activists were routinely followed and their phones were tapped. Viruses were introduced into computers by the intelligence services. Occasionally, offices were raided and documents or other items stolen.

Over time it became clear that, though unconstitutional, Fujimori intended to make a third bid for the presidency in April 2000. Mechanisms were put in place to ensure his victory through control of the congress, the judiciary, the electoral apparatus, and segments of the press.⁴³

The relentless pursuit of re-election that drove government action had a high political cost. Political opposition to the Fujimori/Montesinos regime grew, especially after revelations that up to one million signatures had been forged by the Fujimori campaign to register its new political coalition, Peru 2000, for the elections. International and national election monitors declared that the electoral process was significantly flawed. By the second round of voting on May 28, contender Alejandro Toledo and international elections monitors, including the OAS, pulled out, citing their inability to ensure a fair vote count. Fujimori ran unopposed and declared victory. However, even by the dubious official vote count, more than half of Peruvian voters did not vote, spoiled their ballots, or voted for Toledo anyway.

The string of electoral scandals and Fujimori’s desperate bid to hold onto power at any cost broke down the apathy and fear

The string of electoral scandals and Fujimori’s desperate bid to hold onto power at any cost broke down the apathy and fear that had put a damper on social protest.

The *Coordinadora* and its member organizations branched out to try new forms of protest and consciousness-raising, employing the creative skills of street performers and artists, and holding concerts, art shows, street theater and vigils.

that had put a damper on social protest. Civil society was galvanized throughout the country to reclaim the right to choose Peru's government.

Fujimori began his third term discredited as a result of widespread electoral fraud, without a popular mandate, and facing continuous protests by civil society and pressure from the international community. The government collapsed in less than two months.

***Coordinadora* work in the new political reality**

The demise of political parties on the left and the right and the collapse of more formal forms of political representation enhanced the role of human rights and other non-governmental organizations, creating new challenges but also providing new opportunities. Political collapse necessitated that the human rights movement take on a more protagonist role. Susan Villarán assumed the Executive Secretary position within the *Coordinadora* in February 1995 and was followed by Sofia Macher in March 1997. Both presided over the coalition during a period when it emerged as a potent force within civil society, at the forefront of efforts to restore democratic principles to government.

During this period, the work of the *Coordinadora* was divided into three areas. The first dealt with ongoing human rights problems and the legacies of the war – largely legal defense and work in the prisons. The second addressed emerging issues related to democracy, such as judicial reform, the power of the military and intelligence services and, towards the end of the decade, the electoral process. A third area of work centered around a range of new rights issues – such as the rights of women and children, and economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) – that came to the fore after the political violence subsided.

Four major advocacy campaigns were undertaken by the *Coordinadora* in this five-year period. The first was a campaign to overturn an amnesty law. The most

sweeping amnesty in all of Latin America was put in place to ensure impunity following the prosecution and conviction of Peruvian military for their participation in the La Cantuta killings.

In a “midnight session,” the Peruvian Congress passed a law granting a blanket amnesty to all military or civilian personnel implicated, under investigation or convicted of human rights violations since the conflict with *Sendero* began. Presented without advance notice on the night of June 13, 1995, and passed the next morning, the bill was immediately signed into law by the president. There was no public debate or opportunity to contest the measure. Impunity for human rights violators became the law, although polls showed that about seventy-five percent of the population opposed the amnesty law.⁴⁴

The main component of the campaign was the collection of the signatures necessary to hold a popular referendum on whether or not to repeal the amnesty law. This effort failed because Peruvians were still fearful and unwilling to be identified in writing with a human rights cause. By early 1996 the *Coordinadora* decided to cease collecting signatures and to focus on popular education. The *Coordinadora* and its member organizations branched out to try new forms of protest and consciousness-raising, employing the creative skills of street performers and artists, and holding concerts, art shows, street theater and vigils.

The campaign also incorporated international advocacy efforts. Peruvian human rights lawyers argued before the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) that the amnesty law was incompatible with the American Convention on Human Rights, and international groups pressured the Fujimori government to end the blanket amnesty.

The amnesty law was a pillar of Fujimori and Montesinos' relationship with the military, and hence fundamental to keeping their hold on power. From their

point of view, it was not an issue that was open to debate. They never budged, but the campaign was successful in galvanizing public opinion on the issue, and laying the groundwork for rapid change once the Fujimori regime fell.

In contrast, the second campaign did yield concrete results. Called “In the Name of the Innocents,” the campaign aimed to secure the release of innocent Peruvians in jail on terrorism charges. During the campaign, the *Coordinadora* focused on the distinction between innocent people and those guilty of terrorism, arguing that there would be no cost to society in freeing innocent people. The public was clearly sympathetic with the campaign. Politically astute, Fujimori realized that the amnesty law had been unpopular. In part as a calculated strategy to improve his image, Fujimori began to publicly recognize that some mistakes were made, hinting that he might be open to reviewing some cases of innocent Peruvians in jail on terrorism charges.

Eventually an Ad Hoc Commission, composed of three members,⁴⁵ was created to review individual cases and make recommendations to the president for granting a pardon in those instances where a conviction was based on fabricated, coerced or insufficient evidence. Recommendations to grant a pardon had to be unanimous. The president decided whether or not a pardon was granted.

Though falling short of the *Coordinadora*’s desired outcome, it was clear that the Ad Hoc Commission was the most that could be accomplished under the circumstances. Once it was in operation, *Coordinadora* member organizations presented cases and assisted its staff in preparing recommendations to be presented to the Commission. President Fujimori pardoned 513 innocent people – 481 via the Ad Hoc Commission and 32 after its mandate expired. The creation of the Ad Hoc Commission also generated a more conducive climate for the acquittal through the courts of thousands of persons wrongfully accused of terrorism.⁴⁶

As other horrendous forms of political violence no longer dominated the human rights agenda, torture became a priority issue for action by the *Coordinadora*. Investigations in Peru had consistently shown that the vast majority of those detained for common crimes and terrorism were tortured. More recent studies indicate that rape and other forms of sexual abuse are a common form of torture used against both men and women.⁴⁷

The *Grupo Jurídico* of the *Coordinadora* wrote draft legislation, adopted in 1998, that introduced “crimes against humanity” into Peru’s criminal procedures code. Immediately after torture was codified into law for the first time – allowing the first prosecutions of state agents for committing torture – the *Coordinadora* launched a third campaign, “Live Without Torture.” The idea was to declare towns and cities “free of torture.” The *Coordinadora* prepared and distributed popular education materials to all of its members. A communications strategy was developed to generate favorable press coverage and public opinion. At the local level, alliances were struck with elected officials, representatives of the Human Rights Ombudsman’s office, public health workers, professional organizations and others sympathetic to the cause. Most importantly, local groups sought to involve members of the police and the armed forces in the campaign.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998 resulted in a fourth coalition-wide campaign with educational activities oriented towards truth and justice issues. A communications strategy was designed targeting youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. The campaign slogans were: “Human Rights are for Everyone” and “Human Rights are Your Rights.”⁴⁸ Popular education materials and media outreach were used in an effort to reach the general public.

The evolving human rights agenda

With the end of the period of extreme violence, there was lively discussion about the *Coordinadora*’s appropriate role in

The *Coordinadora*’s “In the Name of the Innocents” campaign yielded concrete results. It helped secure the release of hundreds of innocent Peruvians in jail on terrorism charges.

The polling revealed that few people saw human rights as related to their day-to-day struggles. In response, the *Coordinadora* considered how it could reach out in new ways and expand its traditional mandate to touch people's lives more directly.

Peruvian society. One central question was: how can the human rights movement move from working primarily with victims of violence to relating to the broader citizenry? A series of opinion polls and focus groups on human rights-related issues were conducted in September and October 1995 in the cities of Lima, Huancayo and Iquitos. The results revealed two important, but somewhat contradictory trends. First, only eighteen percent of those polled linked human rights groups with terrorist groups, indicating that the Fujimori government's efforts to delegitimize the movement and present it as the legal arm of terrorism had had little impact on the *Coordinadora's* overall image. Second, the poll showed acceptance and sensitivity to "rights" issues among eighty-two percent of the population, providing evidence of the impact of human rights education over the years.

The polling also revealed that few people saw human rights as related in any way to their day-to-day struggles. The questions became whether or not, and how, the *Coordinadora* should reach out in new ways and expand its traditional mandate to touch people's lives more directly. Another issue that surfaced was that, while people recognized that they have rights, they also believed that they would not be respected.

At the 1995 *Encuentro*, a major discussion took place among member organizations about what role the *Coordinadora* should have in promoting economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR), and what priority they should have on the national human rights agenda. An agreement was reached to form an ESCR Roundtable with three objectives: (1) to study ways in which the *Coordinadora's* mandate could be expanded in this area; (2) to conduct a more integrated evaluation of the human rights situation in Peru, with the idea of presenting a joint report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and (3) to broaden the dialogue to include other individuals and organizations working on the issue. Convened by the *Coordinadora*, the

Roundtable included participants from other civil society organizations and networks.

In 1997, coinciding with the mandated five-year review of ESCR by the Peruvian government, a report was submitted to the UN Committee. That report resulted in the Committee making fourteen recommendations to the Peruvian government. Other achievements of the Roundtable included a 1998 workshop to train human rights activists on promoting ESCR and a survey of the *Coordinadora* membership on their work on ESCR. The latter showed that more than sixty percent of *Coordinadora* member organizations carry out ESCR-related activities and that some of the groups dedicate more than half of their time and resources to work on ESCR.

Another new issue put on the evolving agenda was that of discrimination. Similar to the analysis on ESCR, proponents of work on discrimination pointed out that it was also a major underlying factor in the political violence of the previous decade. Following the model adopted for ESCR, an Anti-Discrimination Roundtable was established at the 1997 *Encuentro*. Even more broad based than the ESCR Roundtable, it includes both human rights and other organizations working on issues related to racial discrimination, the Afro-Peruvian population, the physically challenged, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS, gender and indigenous peoples.

One issue that immediately came to the fore in the post-political violence period was that of domestic violence. As the incidence of political violence subsided, there was a surge in requests for assistance in cases of domestic violence against women and children. In response to a 1999 questionnaire to all *Coordinadora* member organizations, seventy-one percent reported working on the issue of domestic violence.⁴⁹

After Sofia Macher assumed the Executive Secretary post in 1997, the *Coordinadora* staff implemented an institutional

development plan focused on strengthening its member organizations in the provinces and supporting newly created human rights groups. Improving communication and systematizing information were key components of the plan. All members of the *Coordinadora* were provided with telephones and computers networked together. With only a few exceptions, all *Coordinadora* members are now able to communicate instantaneously via e-mail.

Once the technology was in place and people were trained to use it, a new system was set up to send information to the entire coalition every two weeks regarding activities and pressing issues. *Consejo Directivo* meeting minutes are also distributed to the entire membership. These information and communication channels were put to the test with the flurry of activity around the 2000 elections, when the *Coordinadora* had to constantly evaluate its positions. During that time, *Coordinadora* staff adopted a strategy of sending out emails via the network, informing members of new developments and giving them a time line to respond with comments before action was taken.

At the 1997 *Encuentro*, the *Coordinadora* membership officially adopted a pro-democracy platform and incorporated the issues of strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law into its agenda. It was a natural transition. It was clear that Peru had to return to a more democratic path before human rights guarantees could be institutionalized. Social movements and other civil society organizations were mobilizing in defense of democracy as well, and the *Coordinadora* expanded the circles in which it operated, building new alliances.

The two-year work plan adopted at the *Encuentro* incorporated the area of “democracy and human rights” to promote more active citizen participation in government. Much of this work was cast in terms of the reconstruction of the

social fabric of the country, creating spaces for civil society groups to come together and encouraging civic education. The decision to focus more on democracy issues had a major impact on the way in which member organizations thought about and carried out their work. Macher noted a fundamental shift in “the central focus of our work from individual cases to the political system of the country and how it affects human rights.”⁵⁰ This shift set the stage for the dramatic role that the *Coordinadora* played in the 2000 elections.

The 2000 Elections

The *Coordinadora* was well positioned to become an important player in the events that unfolded around the 2000 elections. Independent of political parties or movements, the *Coordinadora* was seen as an honest broker, above the political fray, yet clearly committed to the struggle for democracy. Moreover, the nature of the *Coordinadora* as a coalition set it apart. While Macher was a high profile public figure, the *Coordinadora* was not seen as imposing its point of view or in any way trying to co-opt other civil society organizations. The *Coordinadora* had a reputation for principled positions. Its opinion was valued by those seeking to gauge the validity or fairness of measures taken by the government with regards to the electoral process.

In contrast to its strategy in other elections, in 2000 the *Coordinadora* moved quickly into the eye of the electoral storm. The issue at play was whether or not Fujimori would allow any other candidate to run, and potentially win, the elections. The *Coordinadora*, like many other civil society actors, came down firmly on the side of free and fair elections and against electoral manipulations by the incumbent. *Coordinadora* member organizations helped to document and denounce the electoral shenanigans taking place and, most importantly, mobilized civil society and shaped public opinion.

The campaign launched by the *Coordinadora* was based on the premise that

All members of the *Coordinadora* were provided with telephones and computers networked together. With only a few exceptions, all *Coordinadora* members are now able to communicate instantaneously via e-mail.



Coordinadora members, outfitted in yellow vests, monitor the *Marcha de los Cuatro Suyos*, a demonstration to protest Fujimori's illegitimate third term.

Independent of political parties or movements, the *Coordinadora* was seen as an honest broker, above the political fray, yet clearly committed to the struggle for democracy.

change required impacting the political process – in this case, a change in government by doing public education and implementing a media strategy. The first step in the campaign was the production and distribution of *44 Puntos para un Plataforma Básica Sobre Derechos Humanos en el Perú* (44 Points for a Basic Human Rights Platform in Peru), which it presented as “a basic human rights agenda so that the next government ... might overcome the grave problems in this area faced by Peruvian society.”⁵¹ Covering eight areas, the forty-four recommendations made clear the Fujimori government's lack of democratic credentials and the urgency of a democratic transition. In addition to being presented to presidential candidates, the document was distributed widely across the country and was used by local groups in their electoral education efforts.

Next, the *Coordinadora* focused on its media strategy and the mobilization of public opinion. Regular press releases documenting and denouncing electoral fraud were published in the Lima daily papers, and Macher and other human rights leaders were regularly quoted in the independent press. Since the government controlled the major national television stations, the most effective presswork was carried out in the provinces, where local radio stations and newspapers were often

sympathetic and able to give extensive coverage to alternative viewpoints.

Transparencia, an independent electoral watchdog group, was the primary organization reporting on the electoral process and mobilizing thousands of Peruvian citizens as election observers. The *Coordinadora* assisted in these efforts in two important ways. First, it convened a broad cross-section of civil society, pulling together sectors of the NGO community, the church, universities, unions and others to support the efforts of independent monitors. Second, *Coordinadora* member organizations in the provinces became an important source of election monitors at local polling stations.

The *Coordinadora* had already planned to send a delegation to participate in the OAS General Assembly meeting in Windsor, Ontario in the immediate aftermath of the May 2000 elections. At that meeting, the *Coordinadora* built on its previous work with the OAS and lent its credibility to facilitate advocacy efforts for a strong international rebuke of the elections. The *Coordinadora* sponsored a joint press conference with *Transparencia* and facilitated their access to key OAS officials and Foreign Ministers. An OAS mission was sent to Peru, and the OAS sponsored a dialogue between the government, the political opposition, and key civil society representatives, the *Coordinadora's* Macher among them.

Also after the elections, the *Coordinadora* was a key actor, among others, in denouncing the fraud and promoting a democratic alternative, helping to pave the way for the collapse of the authoritarian Fujimori regime. It provided and trained monitors, outfitted in yellow vests, for a massive demonstration – *La Marcha de los Cuatro Suyos* – to protest the initiatives of an illegitimate third term. The human rights monitors were probably successful in preventing some abuses and documented human rights violations when violence erupted.

The fall of the Fujimori/Montesinos regime

The power structure so carefully assembled by Fujimori and Montesinos crumbled quickly, particularly after a video came to light revealing the bribing of members of congress from opposition political parties. On September 16, 2000, Fujimori announced that new elections would be held, that he would not run, and that the SIN would be dismantled. Peruvians took to the streets in a spontaneous celebration. Following two weeks permeated by coup rumors and uncertainty, Montesinos fled the country. By mid-November, Fujimori had fled into exile. He attempted to resign via fax from Japan. Congress refused to accept the resignation and on November 21, 2000, declared the presidency vacant due to Fujimori's "moral incapacity," as allowed by the 1993 constitution.

With the resignations of both vice presidents, Valentín Paniagua, the next in the line of succession, was sworn in as president of Peru. His transitional government was charged with responsibility for carrying out free and fair elections in order to pass the torch to a democratically elected president in July 2001. Paniagua named an impressive cabinet that was unique in that its members pledged to step aside after the transition period. A number of prominent human rights activists became part of the Paniagua government, marking a dramatic change in the political environment.

The new government laid the groundwork for an ambitious reform agenda, affecting almost all aspects of government and civil-military relations. For the first time, the Peruvian human rights community encountered a government that shared much of its agenda. After Paniagua took office, the OAS Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a ruling in a case brought before it by the *Coordinadora* that called for the repeal of the Amnesty Law. The new government accepted the Court's ruling. The extended period of impunity was over.

In 2001 elections that domestic and international monitors deemed free and fair, Alejandro Toledo was elected president. One of Paniagua's last acts as president was to create a truth commission to investigate specific human rights violations committed by both state agents and guerrilla forces during the period of political violence. When possible, the commission was to determine responsibility for such acts and to make recommendations for reparations and institutional reforms. The implementing decree followed most of the recommendations of the *Coordinadora* and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office.⁵² The creation of such a commission was a long-standing goal of the Peruvian human rights community.

Upon taking office, Toledo pledged to abide by the commission's recommendations and renamed it the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation. Sofia Macher, who was just completing her term as the *Coordinadora's* Executive Secretary, was appointed a member of the commission.

Challenges for the future

The *Coordinadora* is in the process of situating itself in the midst of yet another new political and social reality in the aftermath of the authoritarian Fujimori/Montesinos regime. There are new opportunities and challenges. New political space has finally opened with opportunities for reform and for the development and debate of concrete policy proposals. At the same time, the *Coordinadora's* traditional work of denouncing abuses when they occur may now require confronting colleagues with a long trajectory in the human rights movement who are in government. How will the *Coordinadora* develop strategies for constructive engagement and influencing reform processes, while maintaining its independence vis-a-vis the State? According to Sofia Macher the *Coordinadora* must "identify and adequately locate the space for the human rights movement in a democracy."⁵³



INSTITUTO DE DEFENSA LEGAL

Protests against Fujimori's illegal third term.

PART 2. Characteristics of an effective coalition

What is it exactly that enables the *Coordinadora* to function effectively as a coalition? Specific characteristics that strengthen the *Coordinadora* and enhance its effectiveness are cited in this section of the case study. The *Coordinadora*'s successful coalition-building cannot be attributed to any single characteristic. Rather, its success lies in the simultaneous interplay of multiple characteristics, held in balance for a sustained time period.

Belief in strength through unity. The *Coordinadora* was formed at a time when political violence was ravaging the country. Human rights groups were under attack by state and guerrilla forces. The attitude of *Sendero*, the nation's principal guerrilla group, in targeting the human rights community was unique at the time in Latin America. The extreme violence and the experience of being caught in the crossfire between the military and the guerrillas prompted Peruvian human rights groups to stay united. Unity was, first and foremost, a survival strategy.

Unity was also an essential component of any effective human rights action undertaken, particularly during the armed conflict. By uniting, the Peruvian human rights movement was able to construct a whole greater than the sum of its parts. As a coalition, the *Coordinadora* maximizes the comparative advantage of its member organizations, divvying up tasks to avoid duplication and to ensure that quality work is undertaken. This enhances the credibility and legitimacy of the human rights community both at home and abroad. Presenting a united front prevents the government from taking advantage of political or internal divisions to discredit the human rights movement. Unity has enabled the *Coordinadora* to become the civil society interlocutor on human rights issues.

Moral authority. Faith-based groups are the backbone of the *Coordinadora*. They comprise more than half of its member

organizations and bring an ethical and moral voice to the coalition's work that is an enduring and important contribution to the human rights movement in Peru. Over the years the *Coordinadora* has managed to maintain its moral and ethical underpinnings, even as it operated under extremely adverse circumstances. This impressive track record affords it significant moral authority.

Credibility. The *Coordinadora* exemplifies the principle that "the currency of power" of civil society "is not force, but credible information and moral authority."⁵⁴ Over the years, the *Coordinadora* has earned a reputation for being a consistently reliable source of accurate information and analysis. It has erred on the side of caution, refusing to take up cases unless solid information is obtained.

National and international actors actively seek out the *Coordinadora* as the voice of the human rights movement in Peru. The fact that the *Coordinadora* is a national coalition whose voice represents groups not only in Lima, but also in the provinces, also enhances its credibility, and makes it difficult for the Peruvian government to simply dismiss its concerns and demands.

While the *Coordinadora* brings together a broad-based human rights movement, it does not claim to represent or speak for a grassroots constituency. Rather, it speaks in defense of basic human rights principles and the broader public interest. Its credibility derives not from the fact that it represents large numbers of Peruvians, but rather from its adherence to and promotion of principles.

Solid leadership at the top. The *Coordinadora*'s top leadership at the Executive Secretary level has been consistently solid and effective. Francisco Soberón, elected to the post in March 2002, is the fifth of five Executive Secretaries, all of whom have served with integrity. Each was attuned to the

Unity has enabled the *Coordinadora* to become the civil society interlocutor on human rights issues.

Coordinadora's internal dynamics as well as to perceptions of the coalition from the outside. Their strong listening and consensus-building skills have contributed to the *Coordinadora's* unity and track record of formulating principled public policy positions.

According to the *Coordinadora's* internal regulations, the Executive Secretary must be connected to the human rights movement, be a Peruvian resident, and be willing to work full-time during a two-year term (which can be extended). Selection requires a unanimous vote by the Executive Committee. Departing Executive Secretaries become a member of the Executive Committee to help ensure continuity.

Membership criteria. Since its founding, a conscious effort has been made to underscore and nurture the shared vision and values of the membership of the *Coordinadora*. In order to join the *Coordinadora*, organizations must accept and affirm four basic principles: rejection of violence of all types, independence from the State and political parties, commitment to a democratic society, and opposition to the death penalty. This set of shared values has helped the *Coordinadora* maintain its unity over the years.

In addition, a group must be in existence for two years to be considered for membership in the *Coordinadora*. New member organizations must be approved at the biannual *Encuentro*.

Non-partisanship. In stark contrast to experiences in other Latin American countries, in Peru the *Coordinadora* and the human rights community as a whole have maintained a firm commitment to political independence. Individual political parties have not been able to exert control over Peru's human rights movement. The lack of political party influence gives the movement greater credibility and persuasive powers with government officials, the Peruvian citizenry and the international community.

At the time of its formation and with encouragement from its faith-based members, the *Coordinadora* adopted a policy of non-violence and asserted its independence vis-a-vis all armed actors and political parties. The *Coordinadora* denounced and documented abuses by *Sendero* and the MRTA as well as by state forces. The *Coordinadora's* balanced reporting and clear condemnation of guerrilla abuses enhanced its credibility, allowing it to gain support from governments and international institutions that may otherwise have been more cautious in their approach. Its even-handedness also undercut the Peruvian government's persistent efforts to link the human rights movement to the insurgents.

Sendero's brutality, targeting of civilians – particularly progressive grassroots activists – and repudiation of human rights and of international humanitarian law set it apart from other insurgencies in Latin America. The particularity of this situation prompted Peruvian human rights groups to draw a very clear line between themselves and the insurgents, even though this stance was sometimes controversial with some human rights colleagues outside of the country.

Ability to adapt to the coyuntura. The *Coordinadora* has proven adept at adjusting to the changing political landscape. In Peru the end of the most intense period of extreme political violence coincided not with a return to a more democratic form of government, but rather with the rise of authoritarian rule. The changing political landscape profoundly impacted how the *Coordinadora's* work evolved. It effectively made the transition from a narrow, more traditional human rights agenda to one incorporating broader issues of democratic institution building while articulating the link between the two.

As political space opens and shuts, the *Coordinadora* changes its advocacy strategies. For example, at the Executive Committee meeting after Fujimori's *autogolpe* the *Coordinadora* decided to turn

The *Coordinadora* exemplifies the principle that “the currency of power” of civil society “is not force, but credible information and moral authority.”⁵⁴



The *Coordinadora* and its member organizations helped bring to public view the human face of political violence.

The *Coordinadora* effectively transitioned from a traditional human rights agenda to one incorporating broader issues of democratic institution building while articulating the link between the two.

to the international community for help. The minutes read:

*Upon reflection it was seen that space has closed and that international action is the only avenue since none of the internal control mechanisms are functioning... In order to prevent the dictatorship from consolidating, international support is needed. Only international pressure can bring about conditions conducive to dialogue and negotiation.*⁵⁵

The *Coordinadora* had well-established contacts that allowed it to move swiftly and effectively to help ensure a strong rebuke by the international community of the *autogolpe* and the dictatorial acts that followed.

Constructive engagement with state actors. The *Coordinadora* takes a constructive engagement approach with the government. Sometimes it denounces human rights abuses and other times it proposes reforms or public policy alternatives. The idea was that “one must confront, but also influence.”⁵⁶ Even when it had no alternative but to maintain a confrontational and antagonistic role, the *Coordinadora* sought out opportunities to collaborate with government initiatives.

The idea that state institutions should play a fundamental role in addressing the underlying problems confronting the country became widely accepted within the *Coordinadora* early on. At the local level, where many grassroots leaders were being killed, human rights activists saw building bridges with the State as a way to protect themselves and to prevent a *Sendero* victory.

Even during extremely tense and dangerous times, when conditions allowed, communication existed with a range of national and local authorities of state institutions. More often than not, such communication was ignored, but occasionally a local official could be found who was willing to collaborate. At the judicial level, the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations targeted officials within the Public Ministry – from the Attorney General, to the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, to local prosecutors – sending denunciations and follow-up requests for information. Mid-level judicial and police personnel received training from *Coordinadora* member organizations. Human rights lawyers interacted with judges hearing cases of civilians charged with terrorism, while social workers worked with local prison officials to improve conditions.

In emergency zones, a disappearance often prompted a visit to the regional or local military commander. These visits were inevitably tense and difficult. They would sometimes involve representatives of international organizations in order to attempt to provide greater security to local human rights workers. Local police stations were also visited and were sometimes more receptive than the military, which was almost always hostile and threatening. Communications were also sent to the Ministries of the Interior and of Defense.

The *Coordinadora* also developed its relations with members of the Peruvian Congress, though the congress as a whole rarely was receptive to the human rights community. Relationships were built

primarily with individual congresspersons sympathetic to the human rights cause, particularly those who were members of the Congressional Human Rights Commission. The *Coordinadora* collaborated with congressional offices to gather evidence and documentation for investigations, and to help disseminate the final results. Its ability to work with the Human Rights Commission depended very much on the latter's composition. It was particularly difficult to do so during the second half of the Fujimori government.

Further, the *Coordinadora* regularly formulates, proposes and advocates for legislation and other reforms to promote human rights and democracy in Peru. For example, *Coordinadora* member organizations sought and obtained legislation making torture a criminal offense in Peru. In another instance, the *Coordinadora* member organizations and the Human Rights Ombudsman documented cases of abuse of military conscripts, successfully gained press coverage of the most egregious cases, and drafted legislation that was subsequently passed ending mandatory military service.

Until the mid-1990s this strategy of constructive engagement with state actors showed few signs of success. From its inception until the fall of Fujimori, the *Coordinadora* faced tremendous hostility from successive governments, as well as threats on their lives from state security forces. Over time, however, the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations gained a reputation as political players, through their public denunciations and repeated contact with government officials.

Focus on human rights education. Even during the most difficult years for political organizing and educational work in the Peruvian countryside, the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations prioritized human rights education. Human rights education was viewed as a “preventative action” which gave people tools to defend their rights. It was a way for human rights

movement to impact popular perceptions about the nature of the crisis at hand.⁵⁷

There was a strong foundation on which to build. Peruvian non-governmental organizations have an impressive track record in popular education and a cadre of experienced professionals. Most of the members of the *Coordinadora* are involved in some form of human rights education. Their efforts are facilitated by the *Red Peruana de Educación en Derechos Humanos*, the education arm of the coalition.

The *Coordinadora* persevered in its human rights education, even when it appeared not to bear fruit. For example, in the wake of the *autogolpe* when public opinion was overwhelmingly in Fujimori's favor the *Coordinadora* reoriented its human rights education efforts to focus on civil rights and democracy-related issues. This contributed to later efforts to put Peru back on a democratic path following the unconstitutional and fraudulent 2000 elections.

Skills in planning, implementing and evaluating advocacy campaigns. The *Coordinadora* has developed the institutional capacity to carry out effective advocacy campaigns nationally and internationally. As part of the coalition's planning process, no more than four issues are identified for joint advocacy. Planning documents are written for each campaign, spelling out the problem to be addressed, the objectives to be achieved, the activities to be undertaken to reach each objective, and a calendar of activities. At the conclusion of a campaign, an evaluation is carried out by the Executive Committee. While not all campaigns are successful – due to internal and external factors – over time the *Coordinadora* has honed its skills for planning, implementing and evaluating specific advocacy initiatives.

Ties to the international community. From its inception, the *Coordinadora* prioritized work in the international arena. It cultivated ties and built relationships with the UN, the OAS, and key foreign governments, particularly the United

Even during extremely tense and dangerous times, when conditions allowed, communication existed with a range of national and local authorities of state institutions.



A woman washes the Peruvian flag in a public plaza, symbolically indicating the need to clean up dirty Peruvian politics.

The *Coordinadora's* ability to mobilize international pressure at crucial moments is due in large part to its intentional relationship-building.

States. The *Coordinadora* also formed strategic alliances with key NGOs abroad. It has constructed a transnational advocacy network – linking groups in the United States, Europe and Latin America – to leverage international support for reforms, public policy proposals, and even regime change, in Peru. The *Coordinadora's* ability to mobilize international pressure at crucial moments is due in large part to this intentional relationship-building.

The *Coordinadora* developed a close working relationship with the Peru Peace Network (PPN), a coalition of over three-hundred peace and justice and religious organizations in the United States. PPN serves as both the primary information clearinghouse and the convener on Peru-related issues within the progressive church community. Capable of generating significant grassroots pressure on the U.S. government, PPN played a key role in securing passage of legislation restricting military aid to Peru and resolutions encouraging support for human rights and democracy. Similar solidarity networks operated across Europe, including the Peru Support Group in London and a similar organization in Germany.

The *Coordinadora's* work at the UN has been facilitated by the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, the World Council of Churches,

Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Federation of Human Rights and OMCT-SOS Torture. By the early 1990s, the *Coordinadora* had sustained engagement with various actors within the UN system. Individual cases were presented to the United Nations Human Rights Commission via the Working Group on Forced or Involuntary Disappearances. More often than not, reports published by UN bodies contain the same recommendations made by the *Coordinadora*.

Of note is the collaborative work with the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) in presenting cases before the OAS's Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and in convening the Latin American human rights community to seek to strengthen human rights protection within the Inter-American system. *Coordinadora* delegations (usually the Executive Secretary and others) come in representation of the *Coordinadora* to testify about the overall human rights situation in Peru before the IACHR, attend the annual OAS General Assembly meetings and meet with ambassadors to the OAS. The *Coordinadora* delegations were successful in getting the IACHR to make on-site visits to Peru and to issue reports critical of the Fujimori government.

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the *Coordinadora* began working together in the late 1980s, developing joint advocacy strategies for influencing U.S. policy on Peru on a range of issues. Towards that end, WOLA and the *Coordinadora* established regular channels of communication and a regular flow of information from south to north and vice versa. Every time a *Coordinadora* delegation came to Washington, D.C. for OAS meetings, WOLA organized a round of meetings. Over the years, important relationships were built between *Coordinadora* representatives and key policymakers in the Congress and in the administration. This resulted in sustained

action by key members of the U.S. Congress and occasional action on the part of the U.S. State Department in support of human rights and democracy in Peru.

A parallel process has taken place in Lima. Over the years the *Coordinadora* cultivated relationships with key U.S. embassy staff, particularly political officers. The U.S. State Department's annual human rights report on Peru now draws heavily on the information provided by the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations. In 1998, the *Coordinadora* began hosting all of the ambassadors of key embassies in Lima for a special presentation of its annual report. Closed to the press and off-the-record, the meeting provides an opportunity for a direct and informal exchange.

Linkages between multiple levels. The *Coordinadora* has enhanced its effectiveness by intentionally linking its work at the local, national and international level. At biannual *Encuentros*, the membership of the coalition agrees on four priority issues and policy proposals for joint action and sketches out a work plan for the Permanent Secretariat. Because the *Coordinadora* has member organizations in the provinces and in Lima as well as ties with the international community, it is able to focus the work at all three levels on these common priorities. It mobilizes action and pressure from different directions toward common goals.

Within Peru, the *Coordinadora* is interconnected at multiple levels. If one organizes the different types of actors in Peruvian society in a pyramid, the *Coordinadora* leadership would solidly fall in the middle range of national NGO leaders and intellectuals.⁵⁸ At the same time, many members of the coalition exercise leadership at the local, grassroots level, at the bottom of the pyramid where the majority of the citizenry is located. Meanwhile, the *Coordinadora* has occasional interaction with political, military and religious leaders with high visibility at the top of the pyramid. The *Coordinadora* works simultaneously with a

variety of actors and facilitates communication up and down the pyramid.

Structures that enable broader representation and participation. The *Coordinadora* has developed innovative and relatively democratic ways for member organizations to work together. This has not been an easy task. Peru is one of the most centralized countries in Latin America. Political, economic and intellectual life is concentrated in Lima. Great cultural and racial divides permeate society, between Lima and the provinces, between poor and rich, between rural and urban sectors, between mestizos and whites – in short, between those with power and resources and those without. As a coalition, the *Coordinadora* is reflective of Peruvian society as a whole. It makes a concerted effort to bridge differences, but the coalition is still a microcosm of the larger society. Decision-making authority largely rests in Lima. Most of the leadership of the Lima-based human rights groups is urban, middle class and university educated.⁵⁹ Greater diversity is found in human rights groups in the provinces. However, poor peasants and indigenous, who make up the bulk of the victims of human rights violations, are not as present within the *Coordinadora*.

There is, however, diversity among the member organizations of the *Coordinadora*. Some operate in Lima and others in the provinces. There are smaller and larger organizations. Some function at the local level with the support of volunteers. Others are national or international in scope and have large, professional staffs. Some function on a shoestring budget and others receive large grants from donors to support their work. During the worst years of violence, the level of personal risk faced by different groups varied considerably.

Member organizations work on a wide range of complex human rights issues, including protection of political and civil rights, human rights education, domestic violence, children's rights, environmental and land issues, and ESCR. Some member

The leadership of the *Coordinadora* is sensitive to the need to build bridges between its members in Lima and its members in the provinces in order to create a truly national network.

All decisions made by the *Coordinadora's* Executive Committee are reached by consensus. Consensus decisions help preserve the cohesiveness of the coalition when dealing with controversial matters.

organizations have a single-issue focus while others address multiple issues. Often the issue focus is defined by a specific situation in the region in which an organization is based. The nature of the balance between the different groupings of organizations within the *Coordinadora* is forever evolving. It is reflected in the *Coordinadora's* work plans.

The leadership of the *Coordinadora* is sensitive to the need to build bridges between its members in Lima and its members in the provinces in order to create a truly national network. The *Coordinadora* stands out for having achieved a national presence, with member organizations in eighteen of the countries' twenty-four departments.

Initially, members of the coalition were evenly divided between Lima and the provinces. The number of groups in the provinces has grown over time. As of 1999, provincial groups made up nearly two-thirds of the coalition membership. Groups from the provinces lobbied successfully for greater representation in the Executive Committee, which as of 2001 has six members from Lima and eight from the provinces.

The *Coordinadora* has managed to find ways to respond creatively to delicate situations involving its membership. When the conservative Catholic hierarchy forced CEAS to step down from the Executive Committee, a new category was created to allow its continued participation: "permanent invitee." CEAS, AI and the CAJ became permanent invitees on the Executive Committee. Since all decisions are made by consensus, permanent invitees at the meetings had as much influence as standing members.

Working groups have provided a vehicle for increased participation of member organizations on issues or areas of work of particular interest. For example, regional meetings of the *Grupo Jurídico* both provide training to local human rights lawyers and enable decentralized decision-making.

Access to and use of computers, and email communication in particular, have facilitated the flow of information between Lima and the provinces. This more regular communication lays the groundwork for more democratic forms of decision-making.

Clear decision-making structures and processes. Guided by its member organizations, the *Coordinadora* has established clear guidelines about how decision-making will occur within the coalition. It has defined who within the coalition will be involved in making different types of decisions. Further, it has determined the process that will be used to make each type of decision. All members of the coalition are aware of decision-making structures and processes.

All decisions made by the *Coordinadora's* Executive Committee are reached by consensus. Consensus decisions help preserve the cohesiveness of the coalition when dealing with controversial matters. No action is taken, no pronouncement released, or case denounced without the consensus of all members of the Committee. While this can be a burdensome process, it obliges members with different perspectives to talk things through until there is mutual agreement. During the years of violence, consensus decision-making ensured that cases of human rights abuses were fully documented and vetted by key groups before they were denounced by the *Coordinadora*. On occasion, this means that no action is taken on an issue when it may have been warranted and that some criticize the *Coordinadora* for being overly cautious.

Decisions regarding the priorities and workplan of the coalition are made by a simple majority vote at the biannual *Encuentros* of all *Coordinadora* members.

Media strategies. Although for many years the *Coordinadora* did not receive a fair hearing, from the beginning it sought access to and influence with the media. The *Coordinadora* member organizations

understand the importance of actively educating and lobbying key journalists and editors to ensure coverage of issues it considers priorities.

The *Coordinadora* understands the power of the local media, especially radio, using it to its full advantage. This was of particular importance toward the end of the Fujimori regime. Montesinos had bought off the national television networks, but it was harder for the central government to control local radio stations. Many of these took a pro-democracy line, reporting on electoral irregularities leading up to the 2000 elections and denouncing the fraud that occurred.

The campaign for the release of innocent people in jail on terrorism charges is a good example of a successful media strategy. *Coordinadora* member organizations all over the country introduced the issue to journalists in order to generate human interest stories and raise public awareness. These efforts paid off as stories appeared featuring those unjustly imprisoned, the conditions they suffered behind bars, and the impact on their families. Local radio shows throughout the country and national talk shows hosted released prisoners who related the horrors of their experience. Ultimately, in 1995, eighty-seven percent of those polled in Lima said that they thought there were innocent people in jail on terrorism charges.⁶⁰ The shift in public opinion was a key factor in the Fujimori government's decision to name an Ad Hoc Commission to review the cases of the innocent people jailed on terrorism charges, leading to the release of hundreds of innocent individuals.

By the mid to late 1990s, the *Coordinadora* finally gained media attention. As the 2000 election debate heated up, all of the independent newspapers, the one independent cable news channel and independent radio regularly quoted representatives of the *Coordinadora* and its member organizations.

Alliances with other sectors of civil society. The *Coordinadora* has successfully built strategic alliances with other sectors of civil society. For example, the *Coordinadora* worked in coalition with women's organizations to promote a series of legislative proposals addressing domestic violence and the rights of women, which are now codified into law.

In recent years, with the creation of the ESCR and Anti-Discrimination Roundtables, the *Coordinadora* began to work with a broader range of collegial organizations, including development, women's and indigenous groups.

The *Coordinadora* was a key actor, among others, in promoting democratic principles and furthering the collapse of the authoritarian Fujimori regime. These efforts put the *Coordinadora* in closer contact with influential professional organizations, such as the Lima Bar Association, and with conservative political parties. It also interacted with student groups opposed to the Fujimori regime. As these strategic alliances evolved, the *Coordinadora* convened diverse actors to work together. This put it at the vanguard of civil society's efforts to try to prevent and denounce the fraudulent elections in 2000.



Notes

- ¹ The *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* is referred to throughout this text as the *Coordinadora*, and not by its Spanish acronym “CNDDHH”. The intent is not to identify it as the only *Coordinadora* in Peru. Indeed, it is one of many “*Coordinadoras*” of different sectors of Peruvian civil society that function as effective coalitions.
- ² Javier Diez Canseco, Miguel Echandía and Hugo Blanco. *Dictadura y derechos humanos en el Perú*. Lima, Peru: Perugraph Editores S.A., 1981, p. 199.
- ³ Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones. *La Lucha de los Despedidos: July 1977-January 1978*. Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1978, p. 7.
- ⁴ Diez Canseco, pp. 206-207.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, p. 201.
- ⁶ Tom Burns. ‘*From the Heart of the Wound*’ *The Struggle for Human Rights as a Spirituality: A Cross-cultural Perspective*, PhD Dissertation. Chicago, Illinois: Catholic Theological Union of Chicago, 1996, p. 51.
- ⁷ Patricia Tappatá de Valdez. *Evaluación de las Respuestas de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales de Derechos Humanos a la Violencia Política en el Perú Durante el Período 1980-1986: Recomendaciones para su Actuación Futura*. Lima, Peru, unpublished manuscript, 1991, p. 50.
- ⁸ *Comunicado Público*, Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 1979.
- ⁹ Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos. *La Tortura en el Perú*. Lima, Peru: Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 1980.
- ¹⁰ *A New Opportunity for Democratic Authority: Human Rights in Peru*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch/Americas, September 1985, p. 2.
- ¹¹ Joanna Drzewieniecki. “The Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos: A Case Study,” in Aldo Panfichi, ed. *Sociedad Civil, Espacios Públicos y Democratización en América Latina, Vol. 1: Andes y Cono Sur*. Mexico-Lima: Fondo de Cultura Económica-Fondo Editorial PUCP, forthcoming 2002, p. 9. Page numbers from original manuscript.
- ¹² Michael Fleet and Brian H. Smith. *The Catholic Church and Democracy in Chile and Peru*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997, p. 231.
- ¹³ Darío López. *Los evangélicos y los Derechos Humanos: La experiencia del Concilio Nacional Evangélico del Perú 1980-1992*. Lima, Peru Centro Evangélico de Misiología Andino-Amazónica, 1998, p. 115.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in *La Desaparición Forzada de Personas en el Perú (1980 – 1996)*. Lima, Peru: Defensoría del Pueblo, 2000, p. 254.
- ¹⁵ Hortensia Muñoz. “Human Rights and Social Referents: The Construction of New Sensibilities,” in Steve Stern, Ed., *Shining and Other Paths*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 450.
- ¹⁶ These were the *Comité “Mártires de Uchuraccay”*, the CCP, COMISEDH, APRODEH, *Grupo de Apoyo FEDEFAM*, CEAS, CODEH-Cusco, CODEH-Puno and the union for *La República* newspaper.
- ¹⁷ Letter of invitation to *Primer Encuentro Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, December 18, 1984.
- ¹⁸ Tappatá de Valdez, pp. 74-75 and interviews by Coletta Youngers with various Encuentro participants in 2001.
- ¹⁹ *Reglamento de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, May 20, 1985.
- ²⁰ “Carta Abierta de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos,” *La República*, April 6, 1985.
- ²¹ Tappatá de Valdez, pp. 44-45.
- ²² *Tolerating Abuses: Violations of Human Rights in Peru*; New York, NY: Human Rights Watch/ Americas, 1988, pp. 8-9.
- ²³ Rodrigo Franco was a lawyer who was allegedly killed by Sendero in 1987.
- ²⁴ *Resumen Semanal*. Lima, Peru: DESCO, No. 480, July 28, 1988, no page numbers.
- ²⁵ *In Desperate Straits: Human Rights in Peru after a Decade of Insurgency*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch/ Americas, 1990, pp. 81-82.
- ²⁶ According to *Caught between Two Fires*, New York, NY: Amnesty International, 1989, p. 7, when President García left office nearly half of the Peruvian population was living under a state of emergency.
- ²⁷ Senator Enrique Bernales, et al., *Violencia y Pacificación en 1991*. A report presented in 1991 by an investigative commission of the Peruvian Congress and commonly referred to as the “Bernales Report;” no page numbers.
- ²⁸ Carlos Basombrío. “Sendero Luminoso and Human Rights”, in Steve Stern, Ed., *Shining and Other Paths*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 426.
- ²⁹ Interview by Coletta Youngers with Francisco Soberón, October 25, 2001.
- ³⁰ Tappatá de Valdez, p. 95.
- ³¹ Interview by Coletta Youngers with Felipe Zegarra, December 11, 2000.
- ³² President Alberto Fujimori, *Mensaje a la Nación*, July 28, 1990.
- ³³ Quoted in *Human Rights Determination for Peru*, a memorandum released by the Washington Office on Latin America, September 9, 1991, p. 5.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.
- ³⁵ In the civilian courts, judges wore hoods and their identities were unknown.
- ³⁶ See the *Coordinadora’s* annual reports for 1993, 1994 and 1995.

- ³⁷ "22 mil inocentes estuvieron detenidos," *La República*, 5 July 2002.
- ³⁸ *Informe Sobre la Situación de los Derechos Humanos en el Perú en 1992*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 1993, p. 19.
- ³⁹ *Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos "Contra la Impunidad en América Latina."* Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, 1990, p. 187.
- ⁴⁰ Carlos Basombrío in Steve Stern, p. 428.
- ⁴¹ Coletta Youngers. *After the Autogolpe: Human Rights in Peru and the U.S. Response*. Washington, D.C.: The Washington Office on Latin America, July 1992, p. 45.
- ⁴² Interview by Coletta Youngers with Alejandro Silva, October 25, 2001.
- ⁴³ Coletta A. Youngers, *Deconstructing Democracy: Peru Under President Alberto Fujimori*, Washington, DC: Washington Office on Latin America, February 2000.
- ⁴⁴ Wolfgang Heinz and Santiago Pedraglio. *Informe de la Evaluación de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos: 1992-1997*, internal document, 1997, p. 28.
- ⁴⁵ These included the Minister of Justice, the Human Rights Ombudsman and a personal delegate of the President, Father Hubert Lanssiers.
- ⁴⁶ Statistics provided by the Instituto de Defensa Legal in May and June 2002.
- ⁴⁷ See the annual reports of the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos.
- ⁴⁸ Rafael León. "Estrategia de Comunicación para Aniversario en el Perú," internal document, Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, December 17, 1997.
- ⁴⁹ *Informe sobre el Diagnóstico Institucional*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 1999, p. 18.
- ⁵⁰ Interview by Coletta Youngers with Sofia Macher, April 5, 2000.
- ⁵¹ *44 Puntos para una Plataforma Básica Sobre Derechos Humanos en el Perú*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 2000.
- ⁵² The government created the Truth Commission via Decreto Supremo 065-2001 PCM, published in *El Diario Oficial "El Peruano,"* June 4, 2001.
- ⁵³ Sofia Macher. *Papel del Movimiento de Derechos Humanos en la Caída del Regimen, Hecho que Marcó el Inicio de la Transición Democrática*, report to the Encuentro Nacional of the Coordinadora, November 2001, no page numbers.
- ⁵⁴ Ann M. Florini, Ed. *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*. Washington, D.C., The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000, p. 11.
- ⁵⁵ *Reunión del Consejo Directivo*. Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Internal Memorandum, April 27, 1992.
- ⁵⁶ Interview by Coletta Youngers with Diego García-Sayán, April 10, 2001.
- ⁵⁷ Tappatá de Valdez, p. 90.
- ⁵⁸ John Paul Lederach. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997, p. 39.
- ⁵⁹ Drzewieniecki, pp. 23-24.
- ⁶⁰ *A la Intemperie: Percepciones sobre derechos humanos*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 1996, p. 130.

The courage of Peruvian human rights defenders in the face of adversity and their tireless commitment to the human rights struggle in Peru provide encouragement to us all. Below we illustrate examples of their struggle with the stories of a handful of these courageous individuals.

Angélica Mendoza The main organization of *familiares* in Ayacucho was ANFASEP (The National Association of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared in the Emergency Zones). Its president, Angélica Mendoza had been threatened from the day she first denounced her son's disappearance in 1983. When she went to the military barracks where she suspected that he was being held after being taken from their home by hooded soldiers and marines she was told that she would be killed and guards then put a gun to her head. Mendoza remained defiant, insisting on the return of her son, and they eventually let her go.¹ But the death threats continued throughout the conflict. Other members of ANFASEP and other relatives of the disappeared routinely faced threats and, sadly, some met the same fate as their missing loved ones. Though it continued to operate, ANFASEP was forced to close its office in 1988.

Porfirio Suni Quispe In a case similar to that of Angel Escobar in terms of its national repercussions, Porfirio Suni Quispe was dragged from his home in Puno on May 13, 1991 by two Senderistas who then shot him repeatedly. A leader of the *Federación Departamental de Campesinos del Perú*, Suni Quispe was a representative in the regional congress and president of its human rights commission.

Augusto Zúniga Paz, the only full-time lawyer at COMISEDH (The National Human Rights Commission), was working on the case of a student, Ernesto Castillo Pérez, who had disappeared following his detention by local police in Villa El Salvador. Zúniga thought he had identified Castillo's killer, a police explosives expert, and he was pursuing legal options. On March 18, 1990, a large envelope bearing the emblem of the Presidency of the Republic was hand-delivered to the COMISEDH office. As it was addressed to the Legal Department, it was passed on to Zúniga. Zúniga later recalled that he had a very strange feeling and instinctively held the envelope at arm's length as he opened it.² That act saved his life: When the sophisticated letter bomb exploded it blew off his left forearm but left his face intact. Zúniga fled to Sweden for medical treatment, where he remained for nearly a decade. Efforts by COMISEDH and other organizations to take the case to trial were repeatedly blocked by government, police and judicial officials.

¹ *Caught Between Two Fires*. New York, N.Y.: Amnesty International, 1989; p. 11.

² Interview by Coletta A. Youngers with Augusto Zúniga following the 1990 attack.

To learn more about the *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú* and their current activities, visit their website at <http://www.dhperu.org>. The site includes links to or information about the group's over sixty member organizations. The full contact information for the *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú* appears below.

Jr. Tupac Amaru 2467
Lince
Lima 14
Perú
Teléfono: (+511) 441 1533
Fax: (+51 1) 422 4827
E-mail: webmaster@dhperu.org
URL: <http://www.dhperu.org>



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This case study is based on an investigation of the history of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos del Perú* undertaken by Coletta A. Youngers in 2000 and 2001. The full history is forthcoming as a book to be published by the *Instituto de Estudios Peruanos* in Lima, Peru. The history of the *Coordinadora* – and the human rights movement in Peru more broadly – is one of successful coalition-building by civil society in two very challenging contexts, that of extreme violence and that of authoritarian rule, in a society deeply divided along racial, cultural, economic and geographic lines. The purpose of this case study is to provide a brief summary of the history of the human rights movement in Peru and to present the lessons learned from the Peruvian experience. We hope that it will be useful to other civil society actors across the region seeking to build coalitions and engage in successful advocacy campaigns.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Ford Foundation/Santiago, Chile for the generous grant that made possible both the broader investigation and this case study. In particular, we want to acknowledge the support of Alex Wilde, who was the inspiration for the investigation and who continues to serve as a mentor for many on the staff of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). We would also like to thank the staff of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* and the countless human rights activists in Peru who contributed to this study. Their courage in the face of adversity and their tireless commitment to the human rights struggle in Peru provide encouragement to us all. Finally, we want to make clear that the views and conclusions expressed in this case study are solely those of the authors.

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WOLA Staff

Bill Spencer

Executive Director

Kimberly Stanton

Deputy Director

Coletta Youngers

Senior Associate for the Andes and U.S. International Drug Policy

Rachel Neild

Senior Associate for Haiti, Police Issues and the Southern Cone

Geoff Thale

Senior Associate for El Salvador, Cuba and Nicaragua

Vicki Gass

Associate for Economic Issues and Central America

Jason Hagen

Associate for Colombia

Eileen Rosin

Drug Policy Project Manager

Adriana Beltrán

Program Officer for Guatemala and Media Coordinator

Rachel Farley

Program Officer for Cuba

Tina Hodges

Program Assistant for Mexico and the Andes

Gabi Kruks-Wisner

Program Assistant for Cuba and Central America

Jana Kurtz

Director of Operations

Nadia Malley

Finance Manager

Lori Piccolo

Associate for Financial Development

Elsa Falkenburger

Development Coordinator

Advocacy**Training Program****HONDURAS OFFICE****Salvador Segovia**

Trainer

NICARAGUA OFFICE**Cirilo Ortega**

Trainer

Leandro Martínez

Administrative Assistant

wolanica@ibw.com.ni

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To Contact Us

Washington Office on Latin America
1630 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009
Telephone: 202.797.2171 • Facsimile: 202.797.2172
Email: wola@wola.org • Web: www.wola.org

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Washington Office on Latin America

1630 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009