

The quantum leap in the evolution of UN human rights operations (HROs) occurred in the context of the Central American peace process and in specific the Salvadorean peace process initiated in May 1989.⁸⁸ At the beginning of 1990, Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar was asked to get more involved in the Salvadorean process, and dispatched Alvaro de Soto as his Personal Representative along with Francesc Vendrell as Deputy Personal Representative. The first stage was the Geneva agreement of April 4 1990, and then more importantly for our purposes, the San José Agreement on Human Rights of 26 July 1990. That agreement resulted in the creation of the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) with a broad mandate to verify and investigate the human rights situation in El Salvador. ONUSAL's human rights division⁸⁹ was set up in July 1991 under the direction of first Philippe Texier and then Diego García Sayán, both reporting to Iqbal Riza as Chief of Mission.

There were a multitude of people involved in the evolution of this first substantive HRO. However a very small number were in fact instrumental in acting as a UN HQ office of responsibility for pulling the operation together and in providing HQ support it once it was deployed. On the UN HQ side, both Alvaro de Soto and his deputy Francesc Vendrell were critical in putting human rights first and foremost on the UN agenda and in negotiating the human rights mandate for ONUSAL. In the field, Texier, Sayán, and Riza were the key individuals in developing field procedures and standards to effect the Agreements.

With clear support by the Secretary-General and participation from his staff (Alvaro de Soto was at the time Special Assistant to the SG), the UNNY Secretariat office of primary responsibility for ONUSAL's human rights division was split between what was to become DPKO and DPA. For a number of reasons, that responsibility has gravitated almost completely to DPA. This is not to imply that DPKO does not feel that it has a role in this area⁹⁰, but it sees its human rights contribution as restricted to possible human rights tasks for UN military and CIVPOL. However there does remain a key HRO support role for DPKO's Field Administration Logistics Division (DPKO/FALD). This DPKO involvement is rather unique in that FALD has been tasked with supporting all UN Secretariat field operations, and finds itself in DPKO largely because military and CIVPOL deployments have made up most of the Secretariat's field operations.

⁸⁸ For a comprehensive account see Christopher C. Coleman, *The Salvadorean Peace Inquiry: A Preliminary Inquiry*, Research Report, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Nr. 173 December 1993. For the human rights aspect see the HRW report *The Lost Agenda* op.cit., or García-Sayan in Aspen/Henkin *Honoring Human Rights and Keeping the Peace* op.cit., and *Improvising History: a Critical Evaluation of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador*, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, December 1995.

⁸⁹ The two other Divisions, Military and Political, became operation about 6 months later in February 1992.

⁹⁰ In fact there are some individuals in DPKO who are not only ambivalent, but at times actively opposed to human rights actions which they see as unnecessarily interfering with their goals, eg. brokering cease-fires and other 'military' solutions. These individuals appear to be a decreasing minority as the benefits of human rights protection become obvious in the search for durable peace.