

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN PERU

ISSUE:

After one year in power, the Fujimori government has achieved measured success in reintegrating Peru into the world financial system with consequent economic improvements and better prospects for the future. While this is expected to have a positive effect on the human rights situation in the medium and longer term, serious abuses continue as a result of the government's struggle against terrorist organizations.

BACKGROUND:

Human rights abuses in Peru are perpetrated primarily by three groups: (1) Sendero Luminoso (SL), (2) Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA), and (3) the military forces in their effort to counter the insurgency. Since 1980, more than 20,000 people have died because of political violence. Between August 1990, and September 1991, despite the genuine goodwill of the President, 2503 deaths due to political violence and 385 cases of disappearance were reported. A reduction in the number of reported disappearances has been noted in recent weeks, especially since the announcement in September of the government's new human rights policy but the numbers are still very high.

At the present time, more than 55% of the population and 40% of Peruvian territory are included in "emergency zones" which are under direct military control, devoid of civil liberties, including habeas corpus. The indigenous population are caught between the terrorists and frequently undisciplined military forces without recourse to any form of relief. Extra-judicial executions, torture, beatings, and rape are common. Government officials, political figures, human rights activists, campesino leaders, members of the clergy, and - recently - foreign aid workers have been targets for abuse and death. Since terrorists often masquerade as military personnel and military patrols have been known to cover their actions to make them appear to have been perpetrated by the SL, it is often difficult to determine responsibility for the violence. The insurgency is largely financed by "taxes" levied against narcotraffickers in the vast areas under terrorist control. The drug trade, although not responsible for extensive direct violence to date, adds another destabilizing factor to the already tenuous situation.

Upon his inauguration as President of Peru in July, 1990, Alberto Fujimori undertook to fight terrorism and the resultant human rights abuses through improved economic activity, a stabilized agricultural sector and agricultural alternatives to