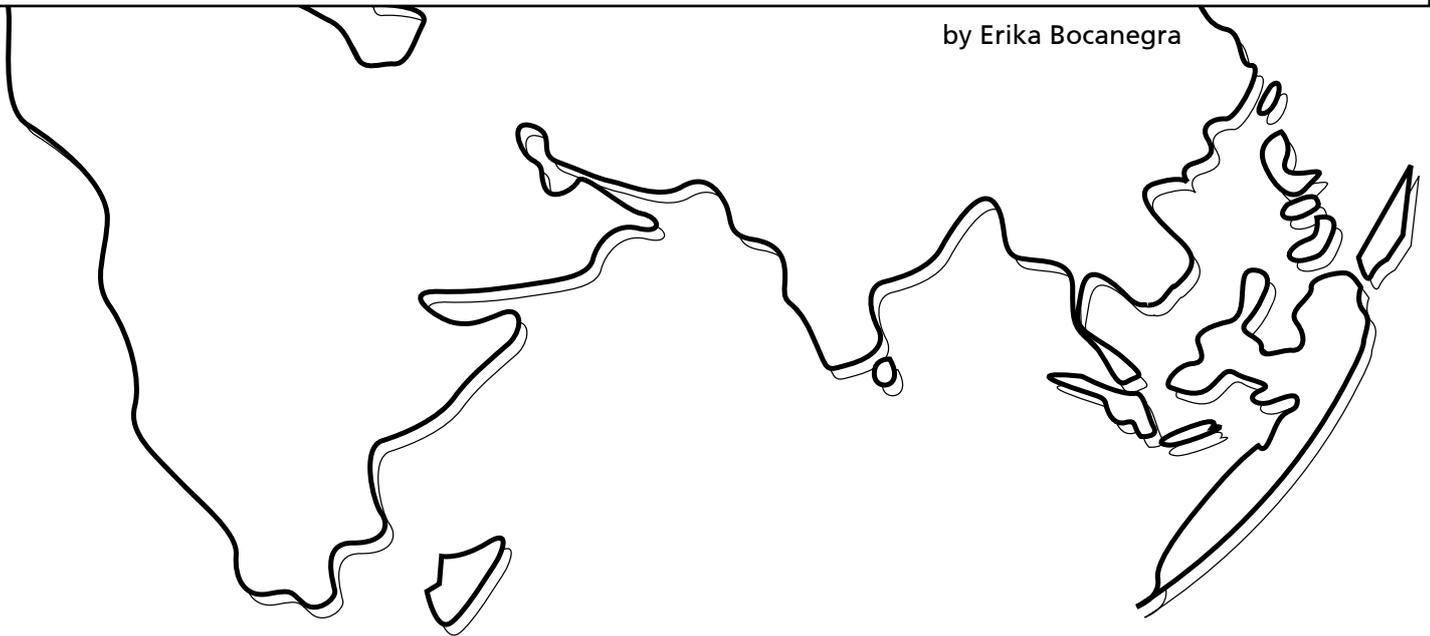


**Together We Are Stronger:**

Peru's Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos  
(National Coordinating Coalition on Human Rights)

by Erika Bocanegra



A Tactical Notebook published  
by the New Tactics Project  
the Center for Victims of Torture

**Published by**

The Center for Victims of Torture  
New Tactics in Human Rights Project  
717 East River Road  
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA  
[www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org)

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### **Erika Bocanegra**

Is a graduate of journalism and has completed specialized studies in human rights sociology. Since 1997 she has been in charge of Communications for the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, where she has had the opportunity to plan and implement a series of national impact and public awareness raising campaigns, which have included work with the media, as well as social, public and political actors. The campaigns have addressed topics such as: the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the liberation of innocent prisoners, the struggle against torture and the promotion to create the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Also, during the process initiated by the efforts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), she took on the coordination of the CNDDHH's Reparations Working Group, an inter-institutional and multidisciplinary group that participated in the production of proposals for reparation for the victims of violence made by the TRC, and that currently seeks the implementation of such proposals. This task included a strong component of political advocacy and strengthening of the capacities of the organizations of those affected.

### **Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos**

The Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH) is a collective of non-governmental organizations that have worked in the defense, promotion and education of human rights in Peru since 1985. The CNDDHH emerged as a result of the outbreak of the internal armed conflict that shook the country between 1980 and 2000.

The mission of the CNDDHH is to promote a human rights culture in Peru. Among its principles are: the promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, respect, and full enjoyment of human rights; rejecting the use of violence and terror as a means to confront social and political problems; opting for a democratic society as an essential value for human coexistence and complete vigilance of human rights issues; being independent from the State and political parties; rejecting the death penalty.

The CNDDHH represents the first reference institution in Latin America that brings together a country's human rights organizations to form a collective. Furthermore, it possesses Special Advisory Status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and is accredited to participate in the activities in the Organization of American States.





April 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the series of tactical notebooks on Human Rights!

In each notebook, a human rights practitioner describes an innovative tactic that has been successfully used in advancing human rights. They have not only pioneered tactics that have contributed to the exercise of human rights in their home countries, they have also affirmed that these tactics can be adapted and applied in other countries and contexts in order to deal with a variety of issues.

The authors are part of a wide and diverse human rights movement from governmental and / or non-governmental perspectives, including education, law, mental health and the processes of truth and reconciliation. Each notebook contains detailed information related to the author and his /her respective organization, achievements, methods, and the resources they used to achieve their goals.

We hope in this notebook to inspire other defenders to think tactically, increasing the realm of mastered tactics that have allowed others to advance and effectively exercise their own rights.

Peru's Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH) is globally recognized as one of the most successful and effective coalitions in the world. The importance of bringing ourselves together in order to have more strength and greater impact is often discussed, but few have been able to achieve this as well as Peru.

The global experience of the human rights movement, unfortunately, is filled with coalitions that have failed both because of divisions as well as a lack of advocacy. In this notebook, Erika Bocanegra analyzes the characteristics of a strong coalition and shows us how to successfully fight against an authoritarian government like that of Fujimori in the 1990s.

The complete series of the Tactical Notebooks is available on-line at [www.newtactics.com](http://www.newtactics.com). Additional notebooks are already available, and more will become available with time. At our Web site you can also find other tools, including a database containing different tactics, a discussion forum for human rights practitioners and information about our workshops and symposiums. If you would like to subscribe to the New Tactics bulletin, please send an e-mail to [newtactics@cvt.org](mailto:newtactics@cvt.org).

The project "New Tactics in Human Rights" is an international initiative directed by a diverse group of organizations and defenders from all parts of the world. The project is coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), and grew out of our experience as creators of new tactics, and as an alternative that promotes the protection of human rights from a perspective where curative treatment and civic leadership are combined.

We hope that you will find these notebooks informational and thought provoking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Kelsch".

Kate Kelsch  
Project Director



**Together We Are Stronger: Peru's Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos**

## I. Summary of the Tactic: A Different Coalition

The Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH) is a coalition of 63 human rights organizations in Peru. Founded in 1985, it has survived due to its ability to unite efforts and adapt to the changing political environment. The coalition relies on a great variety of organizations: urban and rural; national and regional; groups of churches, both catholic and evangelical; and several others. This variety of the institutional profiles of its members legitimizes the collective at a national and international level.

Among the strengths that have made this coalition a point of reference for the defense and promotion of human rights in Peru and the American region, is the capacity to be able to make innovative political decisions in order to maintain its unity, including the principles that guide its actions and the mechanisms that have been used to make decisions, the principle mechanism being consensus. Since its creation, the CNDDHH has had to assume clear positions against violence, and on the way has learned to come to agreement on priorities and actions in order to develop as a collective.

The members of the CNDDHH know that it is more efficient and effective to act as a group: together we are stronger. We will begin our analysis with a detailed example about putting the group work of the members of the Coalition in motion. Later we will point out the elements that in many cases have permitted our efforts to be successful and effective. The example recounts the events that occurred in 1999 when the Peruvian government tried to withdraw from the contentious jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. The CNDDHH managed to involve more than 400 social and political organizations, national and international, in defense of the Peruvian citizens in order to give aid to a supranational institution seeking the protection of their fundamental rights. The notebook provides information with examples related to the operation of the CNDDHH as a coalition, which has been in operation for nearly 20 years.

## II. The Movement in Action

*"Campaign to Stop Peru's Withdrawal from the Inter-American Court on Human Rights"*

### 2.1. Background: Events and Context

In 1999 Peru was living under the authoritarian regime of Alberto Fujimori, who was then beginning his third electoral campaign facing reports of fraud and violations of human rights. In May of that year, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights (ICHR) ruled against the Peruvian state in the Castillo Petruzzi case, finding the State in violation of the right to due process. The Court also saw other cases as being under its jurisdiction, such as the massacre in Barrios Altos, in which the then leader was directly involved.

The Fujimori Government decided not to attack the Court's ruling but instead to announce that Peru would be withdrawing from the Court's contentious jurisdiction. By withdrawing from the ICHR, the Peruvian government was depriving its citizens of the possibility to turn to an international institution in the event that internal justice did not provide the guarantees necessary to attend to their complaints.

### 2.2. Decision Making

Aware of the government's intentions, the Executive Committee of the CNDDHH called for a special meeting and defined its position facing the government's decision:

it thought that Peru's withdrawal from the Court would put at risk the protection of Peruvians' rights as well as the Inter-American system itself. Immediately, it put aside the topics and campaigns of its institutional agenda and decided by consensus to launch a campaign to stop the government's plan. The CNDDHH's Executive Secretary was put in charge of the design and implementation of this campaign.

### 2.3. Objectives and Strategy

The campaign's principle objective was to defend the right of all Peruvians to be able to denounce abuses before the ICHR. In order for this to be possible it was necessary to inform the population about the implications of the government's decision, to channel the respective expression of civil society and to impede the withdrawal from the ICHR.

The campaign strategy had various levels, each of which required specific actions including the identification of key social actors: the national public opinion, the international community, and the very members of the ICHR. The campaign would use lobbying, the spread of educational information, and finally pressure as strategies, each one being implemented with specific tactics. These strategies were developed simultaneously to respond quickly to the demands of the situation.

### 2.4. Mobilizing Peruvian Society, the Tactic

**We are stating our opinion and call on others to do the same**

#### a) *Out of Respect for the Truth*

Less than 10 days after the government made declarations that distorted the decision of the Court in the Petruzzi case, the CNDDHH published its first press release asking that the Peruvian government not manipulate the information and explaining the implications of the ruling as well as the work of the ICHR.

All members of the CNDDHH got involved in the spreading of information, trying to cover the greatest amount of interviews and declarations on the topic as possible. The Executive Secretary of the CNDDHH was in charge of national and international means of coverage. This initial press campaign did not achieve the desired impact: the opinion polls on the topic indicated that the government had the support of the population and/or that the people were not well-informed on the topic. However, some institutions of civil society did begin to state their opinions.

#### b) *Condemning the Withdrawal: Part I*

July 8, 1999, with the government having made official its intention to withdraw from the Court, the CNDDHH issued its first official press release. With this document the CNDDHH coalition changed its tactic, taking a more aggressive position. It began aiming to mobilize other sectors of civil society, including the organizations that make up the Coalition, and to create an open invitation for other organized sectors of Peruvian society to adhere to the position of the human rights movement.

#### c) *Condemning the Withdrawal: Part II*

The National Board of Directors decided to prioritize this action: the objective was to look for the greatest amount of support possible for the press release. Among the actions and decisions that were carried out are:

- The Executive Secretary (ES) of the CNDDHH would be in charge of the organization and implementation of the action, facilitating the work of the organizations,

in particular those organizations from the interior part of the country.

- An Action Memorandum was produced describing the steps to follow and the key actors who should join our position.
- The ES would deal with the financing of the publication; some organizations of the CNDDHH would also contribute.
- Financiers were convinced of the importance and impact of this initiative, since, at the time they were supporting the campaign against torture.

In Lima a team of six volunteers was organized to look for support from national organizations

(by fax, e-mail and mail), to support the work accomplished by the local and national human rights organizations by providing them their logistical necessities and systematizing the information. The members of Lima's CNDDHH promised to support the efforts of these volunteers. We calculated that more than one hundred human rights activists mobilized throughout the country in order to carry out this action.

The efforts of the National Board of Directors and of the Executive Secretary of the CNDDHH focused primarily on the country's interior. All the member organizations committed to giving priority to mobilization in a very short time: one week. The allied institutions from each zone were summoned and asked for their support in the announcement, aiming to legitimize the position of the local human rights organizations. The goal was, moreover, to make a pedagogical effort in the spread of action, utilizing support from the local press in the spread of information.

#### *d) Mobilizing the International Community*

Along with these actions at the national level the members of the CNDDHH's National Board of Directors began to travel through the American continents looking for support from other countries. In four months they visited Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, the United States and Venezuela. On each visit they met with chancellors or government representatives, as well as with the press and social organizations. The human rights organizations in these countries were important allies, organizing the work plans of the visiting Peruvian colleagues and mobilizing the media.

#### *e) Educating public opinion*

Aiming for a simple and effective way to circulate information on a massive scale, the CNDDHH, in agreement with the Peruvian Press Council, produced and distributed nationally 500,000 issues of an explanatory brochure describing the importance of the court. Specialized material for journalists was also produced.

#### *f) Results*

The campaign had positive results in both the short- and long-term. In the short term it demonstrated that at the national level, organized civil society was capable of mobilizing itself against the Alberto Fujimori regime, which was demonstrated by the fact that 400 organizations had signed the press release. Furthermore, with an effective information-spreading campaign the tide of public opinion that did not favor Peru's continuation in the ICHR was reversed. This motivated an energetic rejection of

the regime, although there were also attacks on human rights organizations.

Meanwhile, the international human rights community, as well as other external actors, reacted favorably to the CNDDHH's position with more than 200 organizations from all around the world that joined our call. Various governments from the region, as well as from other continents, officially requested that the government modify its position. The Inter-American Court itself sent out a press release energetically rejecting the position of the Peruvian government.

This situation with the ICHR was a factor that contributed to the dismantling of Alberto Fujimori's regime, exposing it as a corrupt regime and violator of human rights at a national and international level. One of the first decisions of the transition government was to officially regularize Peru's continuance in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

### **III. Other Campaigns**

#### • *The Disappeared [0000]*

A permanent support campaign to the family members of those disappeared during the internal armed conflict with hopes of shedding light on their problems.

#### • *Against the Death Penalty [1995]*

A signature collecting campaign to prevent Congress from approving an initiative that would incorporate the death penalty.

#### • *Campaign Against Impunity [1996]*

Educational and informational workshops on impunity, shaping a movement that incorporated, by means of communication and similar organizations, people naturally affected by Amnesty Law, as well as social organizations in order to demand the abolition of the law.

#### • *Freeing the Innocent [1997]*

A campaign to free thousands of Peruvians who were incarcerated after being unjustly accused of terrorism. The campaign also hoped to change the tide of opinion that considered all those accused of terrorism to be guilty.

#### • *50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1998]*

Celebrating the anniversary of the Universal Declaration, aiming to make known the contents of this Declaration as well as the work of the country's human rights organizations.

#### • *Let's Live Without Torture [1999]*

A campaign to make known the problem of torture and to promote the involvement of local authorities and social organizations in a team effort to eradicate this practice.

#### • *Democracy Right Now! [2000]*

An effort to coordinate social and political organizations to fight against Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian dictatorial regime.

#### • *The Barrios Altos Case [2000]*

Actions oriented towards the citizenship to make known the massacre of Barrios Altos and the crimes committed by Fujimori, his advisor Montesinos and the death squad "Grupo Colina."

#### • *For the Creation of the Truth Commission [2001]*

During the transition government this campaign aimed to mobilize civil society and the media to emphasize the need to form a Truth Commission.

• *I am Remembering...So That It Is Never Repeated [2002]*

A campaign to support the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that addressed public audiences at a local and national level on topics such as reparations and justice.

• *Extraditable Fujimori [2003]*

An international campaign working for the extradition of the fugitive of justice, former President Alberto Fujimori; hoping to create pressure in the Japanese government.

**IV. Creation: History of the CNDDHH**

How was it possible to triumph over Fujimori? This triumph would not be as surprising if the regime had not worked ardently to systematically dismantle and sabotage social organizations like the CNDDHH. Knowing the history of the human rights organizations that make up the CNDDHH one can better understand just how the organization had the authority to confront a corrupt government that violates human rights, and was able to channel the rejection of large sections of the citizenry.

May 17, 1980 in the Ayacuchan village of Chuschi an armed group from Peru's Communist Party – Shining Path – decided to initiate an armed struggle against the Peruvian State, boycotting the elections that marked Peru's reincorporation into democratic life after 12 years of military dictatorship.

The war lasted 20 years, from 1980 until the year 2000. It was a conflict that not only brought armed and police forces face to face with subversive groups, but one in which the local and national authorities and the civil population (mainly the rural and Andean population) were the main target. This conflict brought on a State of Emergency in many regions and departments, and debilitated the country's political and social fabric.

In its Final Report the Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that the number of fatalities—that is deaths and disappearances—produced by the internal armed conflict is 69,280 Peruvians.

*Background*

During the 1970s human rights organizations did not collaborate in their efforts. They dedicated their attention to cases related to labor, economic, civil and political rights, topics connected to the social mobilizations of the period.

In 1982, two years after the conflict began, human rights groups started to focus their attention on forced disappearances, displacement and torture, among other violations of fundamental rights. Facing the considerable increase in cases at this crucial time, other organizations began to appear. It became evident that it was necessary to develop more systematic mechanisms of sharing information and coordinating work among the organizations that already existed.

The CNDDHH extended its work to other geographic areas in order to have an effective presence in places where atrocities were committed. However, being in emergency zones involved being subjected to threats and rejection, or being labeled as “defenders of terrorists.”

*Looking for New Strategies and New Tactics*

There are several reasons why human rights organizations decided to form a coalition to look for new strategies and innovative tactics for group work: the request made by those affected by the violence as well as provincial human rights groups; the necessity to increase the credibility and effectiveness of the human rights community; and, to rely

**Chronology**

• **May and June, 1999**

- The ICHR's judgment in the Petruzzi case is made public.
- Government representatives begin to make declarations rejecting the judgment and misinforming the public about the case.
- The CNDDHH's National Board of Directors meets to evaluate the situation. It decides to act and create a campaign.
- The first press release is issued

• **July 8, 1999**

- After the Peruvian government has made public its intention to withdraw from the ICHR, the first official press release rejecting this action and calling on other organizations to join is released.

• **July 19, 1999**

- 400 organizations from civil society have added themselves to the CNDDHH's press release

• **July 20, 1999**

- The government publishes notices in various media attacking human rights organizations

• **August – December, 1999**

- Human rights practitioners travel through different countries trying to mobilize both the international human rights community as well as the other countries in the region.

on a means of protection facing attacks by the military and subversive groups.

In January 1985, a group of human rights organizations, which included, among others, NGOs and institutions connected with the Catholic Church, summoned the First National Conference. The objectives of the meeting were: to coordinate efforts, analyze the national situation, and finally to develop a Campaign Plan as well as a declaration about human rights.

The first official press release “We Declare Ourselves in Favor of Peace and Life” (Nos pronunciamos por la Paz y la Vida) gave birth to the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH), expressing the collective's position as well as its road map. The demarcation from terrorist violence marked a definitive separation from the lawyers and sympathizing family members of SP members who were present.

Soon after, the founding members of the CNDDHH were developing an organizational structure that would facilitate the exchange of information and reaction to the situation in which the country was living. The CNDDHH was setting itself up as an alternative space to the church and left-wing politics.

### What is the Inter-American Court of Human Rights?

The Inter-American Court on Human Rights is the highest court of justice created for the protection of the human rights of the people belonging to the American States. It protects the fulfillment of obligations contracted by the States that have signed the American Convention on Human Rights.

## V. Factors that have Helped in Developing and Strengthening the Work of the CNDDHH

These notes have been extracted from the reflections of Coletta Youngers in the book, Political Violence and Civil Society in Peru: History of the National Commission on Human Rights, edited by the Institute of Peruvian Studies.

### 5.1. Unity

Very early on, the members of the CNDDHH learned that unity was an essential survival strategy during the period of violence. They were being watched by subversive groups as well as state agents, both of which were responsible for crimes and violations of human rights.

The idea “together we are better” quickly caught on with the members of the coalition. It was a process of recognition of the capacities of each separate institution and at the same time a bet that the sum of these institutions would build something greater, something that would serve as an umbrella and support them all, and something that would help with the creation of one voice to effectively represent the collective.

This collective effort required the distribution of tasks among the members of the coalition as well as an opportunity for decision making. It was never easy. There were tense moments and criticism, as much for these discussions as for the mechanisms employed for each case, but the dynamic built over time guaranteed that, for example, the actions taken to impede the withdrawal of Peru from the ICHR were assumed and understood by the group of organizations as a task for them all, from the smallest organizations to those of greatest scope.

### 5.2. Moral Authority and Values

Since its foundation, the CNDDHH has aimed for a shared vision, and some values that have guided its action resulted in a common identity. The member organizations of the CNDDHH have had to adhere to four basic principles: rejection of all types of violence, independence from the state and political parties, opting for a democratic society and rejection of the death penalty.

### 5.3. Credibility

Over the years, the CNDDHH has tried to be a trustworthy source of analysis and information. This has led them to be very cautious in the selection of campaign topics as well as the cases that have been denounced.

The very composition of the organization has been another aspect that has favored its credibility. In the CNDDHH there are members from Lima as well as provincial members who work with different sectors and topics, providing very diverse services to the population. Despite having this diverse composition the CNDDHH has never attempted to speak in the name of the great majority of Peruvians but rather in the name of the defense of their fundamental rights.

### 5.4. Leadership

The executive secretary, an organ of voice and public representation, has been a key actor in the consolidation of

the CNDDHH. These human rights leaders have managed to generate a tide of public opinion and to react opportunely to the needs of the national political situation, as well as to the challenges of institutional development that have required national coordination. Without this leadership it would not have been possible to mobilize the organizations of the coalition, nor the other social actors, in order to channel their discontent for the actions of the Fujimori government. The public and the political actors have learned to recognize in this voice the positions and demands of an entire community: the human rights community.

These human rights practitioners have known how to lead processes of internal development of the movement, as well as be spokespersons in national and international public spaces. In order to do this they have had to demonstrate the capacity to negotiate and reconcile diverse positions among their colleagues, as well as to facilitate processes of dialogue. In the public sphere they have had to demonstrate charisma and the ability to interact with the media as well as with other social and political actors, bringing a single voice on behalf of the collective.

### 5.5. Non-partisanship

Since its foundation the CNDDHH has rejected violence and declared its independence from all the actors in the internal armed conflict, as well as from the political parties, which have not been able to exert control over the coalition.

The crimes committed by both sides have been energetically condemned by the CNDDHH which has earned the respect of the international community. This was an advantage that helped to offset the attempts of various governments to link the human rights organizations with the terrorist groups. This principle of non-partisanship was cause and reason so that in the first years some organizations linked with political groups moved away from the CNDDHH or tried to discredit its work. It is a practice to remove any member that does not act in accordance with this principle.

### 5.6. Connections with the State

Under favorable conditions, the CNDDHH has looked for or accepted opportunities for dialogue with the State in order to propose institutional or legislative reforms, as well as public policy on the subject of human rights. This dialogue by no means meant that it ceased to denounce the violations of human rights committed by State agents.

Since its beginning the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDDHH) has agreed that, on an international level, the Inter-American System of the Organization of the American States (OAS) was a privileged and important space of human rights advocacy, in some moments even more effective than the United Nations.

For this reason, the Commission and the Inter-American Court on Human Rights are used to present cases of abuses of fundamental rights while at the same time promoting actions of advocacy on topics that concern democracy and the protection of human rights in the region. Currently, among other actions, the CNDDHH presents itself two times a year before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and gives a report on the situation of human rights in Peru.



The members of the CNDDHH meet in General Assembly every two years. 1997.

### 5.7. Connections with the International Community

Since its beginning the CNDDHH has identified actors in the international community as strategic allies. Through the years ties have been established with the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and foreign governments, among others. This would not have been possible without the help of non-governmental organizations from various regions of the world, those that implemented advocacy strategies that crossed boundaries and offered answers to crucial problems during the recent decades.

Thanks to these solid relationships, human rights practitioners were able to travel the continent in order to convince other governments of the risk that Peru's position presented to the Inter-American System.

### 5.8. Human Rights Education

Human rights education has been a way to prevent more abuses and promote civic exchange on the understanding and exercise of human rights. Even in the most difficult moments of the conflict, human rights organizations achieved some type of education on the subject. After the autogolpe (self-coup d'état) in 1992, democracy and citizenship were also added as topics in human rights education.

Facing the withdrawal from the ICHR, the CNDDHH did everything possible to convert a topic that was outside of public understanding into accessible information that was easy to understand in reference to the direct and daily impact that it could have in the exercise of rights.

### 5.9. Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy has become one of the CNDDHH's specialties. Working as a group, there is greater strength to achieve lobbying actions and achieve goals that would have been difficult for any individual organization to achieve on their own. Every two years the members of the CNDDHH meet in a plenary session to decide the central campaign themes.

The design and implementation of the campaign is the job of the Executive Secretary while validation, accompaniment, and evaluation are tasks of the National Board of Directors.

### 5.10. Connections between Different Levels

Every two years the members of the CNDDHH hold their General Assembly in order to decide the central work which will guide the action of the next two years. Furthermore, they delegate to the National Board of Directors and the Executive Secretary the development of the plans and the consensus-making processes necessary to attend to the topics that have been given priority. The debate and final result of these assemblies brings together the needs and problems of the local organizations, those that work on specific topics of national importance and organizations that act on an international level.

The CNDDHH's national campaigns could therefore count on the involvement of various actors working from diverse social and geographic positions and perspectives towards a common objective. This synergy was evident when more than 100 human rights activists came together to create pressure and mobilize others to channel discontent for the Fujimori regime and its intentions to debilitate the Inter-American system.

### 5.11. Representation and Widespread Participation

It is important to know that among the members of the CNDDHH we find different organizational profiles: those that work at a local level with volunteer support; those that have regional coverage in the interior part of the country; and finally the NGOs that work in Lima but with the capacity to reach various regions of Peru and the international scene simultaneously.

These organizations cover a large range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural topics, but can also specialize in a single topic. This diversity is reflected in the plenary discussions which coalition members have every two years, in the decisions that are made and their subsequent implementation within work plans, and in advocacy campaigns.

It has been difficult to strengthen the connections between the organizations of Lima and those of the provinces, facilitate dialogue, work cooperatively, and exchange experiences and capabilities. Due to these difficulties, specialized and interdisciplinary work groups have been created such as the Legal Work Group and the Work Group on Reparations, which bring together professionals from human rights organizations from various areas of the country.

### 5.12. Structure and Clear Processes for Decision Making

Relying on clear mechanisms for decision making was one of the challenges faced by the founders of the CNDDHH. The years have passed shaping different procedures for decision making. The National Board of Directors (NBD) decisions are made by consensus, which has contributed to consolidating positions as a collective and strengthening public actions, although arriving at consensus has often required long discussions and debates. However, this process has been a mechanism that, during the years of the internal armed conflict, assured the collective's selection decisions of campaigns and cases to publicly defend were well-founded and documented.

It was by consensus that the NBD decided the position of the CNDDHH in the case of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights ICHR and followed up on the planning and execution of the decided actions. Other decisions, such as the coalition's work plans, are made by a simple majority in the General Assembly.

#### Principles of the CNDDHH

- Promotion of a culture of peace, tolerance, respect and whole enjoyment of human rights.
- Option for a democratic society as an essential value for human coexistence.
- Rejection of the use of violence and terror as a means to confront social and political problems.
- Independence from the State and political parties.
- Rejection of the death penalty.
- Transparency in its conduct.

Mobilizing  
civil society:  
400 organizations  
declare themselves  
to be against Peru's  
withdrawal from  
the ICHR.

- **General Assembly.** The highest institution of decision making, it includes the whole of the members of the CNDDHH. It meets every two years and evaluates the coalition's progress, develops the human rights agenda for the upcoming period and approves the incorporation and/or separation of organizations. Furthermore, it elects the National Board of Directors for a new phase of two years.
- **National Board of Directors.** An organ of political direction constituted by 15 institutions from different parts of the country. It is elected by the plenary of the General Assembly every two years. It meets once a month, approves the Annual Operative Plan, the make-up of the Work Tables, the designation or ratification of the Executive Secretary, among other functions.
- **Permanent Committee.** The advisory team of the Executive Secretary, it is made up of the six members of the National Board of Directors and is located in Lima.
- **Executive Secretary.** The representative and spokesperson in the country and abroad for the organizations that make up the CNDDHH. This person is in charge of implementing the decisions made by the General Assembly and the National Board of Directors.
- **Work Groups.** Representatives of the organizations of the CNDDHH who come together to reflect, analyze and develop proposals about specific topics, e.g. the Legal Work Group and the Work Group on Reparations.
- **Roundtables.** Programs or events where diverse organizations not affiliated with the CNDDHH are invited to discuss topics from a more integral perspective, e.g. Roundtable on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Roundtable for Non-Discrimination; Roundtable on Indigenous Communities.

#### 5.13. Strategies for Working with the Media

Human rights organizations are conscious of the power of the media and during many years have tried to build and maintain relations with journalists. In the campaigns conducted by the CNDDHH, journalists and opinion leaders have been key targets for whom information and specialized tools of communication that facilitate the comprehension of the selected topics have been produced. This effort has been directed at the press (written, radio and television) at local and national levels.

The principle objective of work with the press is that of educating, while at the same time making the members of the CNDDHH sources of reliable information and generators of opinion on topics related to human rights.



Member organizations of the CNDDHH constantly meet and prepare.

Throughout the country members of the CNDDHH promoted the position of rejection of Peru's withdrawal from the ICHR; to do this they used every contact with the media explaining in a simple way to mass audiences the most significant consequences of the government's decision.

#### 5.14. Alliances with Other Sectors of Civil Society.

The CNDDHH has built alliances with different social actors, a support strategy that has permitted it to consolidate its legitimacy and strengthen processes of articulation and promotion of the Roundtables on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as those on Non-Discrimination; spaces of broad participation where institutions of development, feminist groups, and indigenous communities, among others, converge.

When called upon by the CNDDHH these institutions and social organizations responded rapidly and positively and declared themselves against the Fujimori regime when it attempted to ignore the jurisprudence of the ICHR.

### VI. Challenges

Without a doubt the work of a coalition is not easy. The necessity of developing capacities to confront the challenges of an always changing social and political context, while dealing with the difficulties that are presented by supporting a coordinated effort among a large number of organizations are items which always appear on the agenda of the CNDDHH.

**Some of the constant challenges to the ability to maintain the Coalition are:**

**Unity:** In order for the coalition to survive, the effort of each of the members is required in accepting responsibilities, recognizing the diverse capacities of other organizations, and working together to respect the decision-making mechanisms. It is understood that mutual trust is an indispensable requirement. In the context of the annual General Assembly, organizations that for some reason have been questioned during prior years are evaluated and their continuing participation in the Coalition is decided in order to guarantee credibility and legitimacy.

**Decisions:** Related to the themes of trust and unity is the necessity to rely on structures and effective decision-making mechanisms that respond to the collective interests. Consensus building is a time-consuming process. In some cases, certain topics on the agenda may not have been addressed or positions may not have been defined with the speed demanded by the social and political situation. This always-constant challenge is a permanent dilemma for the CNDDHH. At times a position must be taken on some urgent topic when not everyone is in agreement on the political position or the strategy. Alternatively, there remains the hope for the construction of a shared point of view or a common agreement on what to say and do regarding the case in question.

It is worth mentioning that the CNDDHH makes constant efforts to explore new forms of finding the consensus that is a fundamental part of its action. Among these efforts is the constitution of specialized groups that have been formed to pay deeper attention to certain subjects: the Legal Work Group, the Work Group on Reparations, as well as ad hoc groups according to which themes need to be debated.



Peace marches during the worst years of the internal armed conflict.

**Representation:** What makes a coalition representative? The question is related to the typology of the CNDDHH's member organizations and the way that it maintains equilibrium of power among its members. Naturally this has changed with the passing of the years. This is reflected in the election process of the directive institutions. In recent years the number of provincial organizations that make up the Board of Directors have struggled to have a greater presence; without a doubt, the agenda of the human rights movement is shaped by their local problems.

## VII. Transferability of the Tactic

Contexts are never identical. This complicates the ability to reproduce the tactic. At the same time there are many similar aspects and challenges between different countries in terms of the violation of fundamental rights. It is becoming more and more necessary to work with others and therefore we have become more and more involved with efforts to articulate and foster collective work. We know that this is not easy, that the organization and the capacities of the groups that we deal with are not the same, and that there is a great diversity of topics and focuses that can be utilized in order to find a solution.

We want to change situations, but more than that, we want to change mentalities; this is a constant goal in the global human rights movement. Upon making use of the coalitions, we hope to better our efforts through new forms of organization that make us more effective and permit us to have an impact on the problem that is of our interest. The members of the CNDDHH discovered that a priority in organizing action was the definition and establishment of clear rules of the game for the internal and external operation of the group: decision making mechanisms and development of a common agenda, structures that permitted the democratic participation of the members, and common principles that directed their political position in the situation.

Polarization and friction have been unrelated to this story. There have been many tense moments that we have faced, but we have remained open to creative ways of overcoming these situations, of accumulating knowledge and attaching value to efforts to add others.

In order to support and strengthen unity over time it is important to emphasize the following points:

- The structure has to create appropriate opportunities for the group members to participate, whether they are large or small, urban or rural.
- The process of decision making has to indicate solutions to controversies and avoid divisions and ruptures, not only in the short term, but in the long term as well. It is not worth it to be effective for a medium term by forcing

agreements if this process causes an internal weakening that, in the long term, attacks the organization's unity. The groups have to feel that the process was just and that their voices were heard. We have affirmed that insisting on a process of consensus is essential. However laborious it turns out to be, it has the impact of strengthening unity in the long term.

- Clarity in the conditions or criteria of membership in the coalition is necessary. The organization must protect itself from being infiltrated, co-opted or sabotaged by external interests. In our case, it was necessary to establish boundaries and to move away from the influence of armed groups and political parties. Each situation can be different but it is probable that we will always find external agents that want to take advantage of and/or distort the work of the coalition. Because of this, the coalition's definition and the structure that it assumes should prevent this risk.
- The coalition's limits and scope of action must be defined, in accordance with the mandates agreed upon by the members. At the same time the members should feel autonomous in making decisions about their strategies and the actions which they take independently from the coalition. Also, it is necessary to make sure that the coalition may take actions that contradict the basic principles of some members the coalition cannot be limited to acting only on topics that have been unanimously agreed upon. Member groups must be flexible in order for the collective to be effective. At the same time the collective must think carefully about the best way to take on topics that are very controversial among group members.
- Leadership and internal mechanisms must be agile and allow the confrontation of controversial topics with a capacity for negotiation that avoids increasing polarization and aims for creative and inclusive solutions.
- And therefore, although unity is protected, the coalition still has the obligation to be effective and have an impact which makes it worthwhile to continue to be a part of it. With respect to this matter the following is suggested:
- The structure must delegate a clear authority to its leadership so that it can act quickly and efficiently.
- The member groups must be ready to respond and participate in the group campaigns, so that the collective strength is clear.
- It is necessary to look for mechanisms that take advantage of the capacities of the group. One such mechanism that is very important is the strengthening of the smallest groups.
- The coalition's leadership must be carefully selected, looking for persons with the ability to represent the group both to the public and the state. The quality and credibility of "the voice" of the movement is important.
- Finally, we would like to pick up on an element that has been key for this coalition: creating within the group the ability to react in spite of the social and political imbalances that generally run through the contexts in which human rights organizations work. It is necessary to remain alert to the events that move our societies—from a human rights perspective—in order to be able to respond without losing sight of our goals and objectives as a collective.