



Inter Pares

BULLETIN

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 2, JUNE 2009

The Hope that Unites Us

In July 2008, Inter Pares staff Nadia Faucher and Karen Cocq travelled to Peru to participate in a regional exchange on truth, justice, and reparation (TJR), organized by Inter Pares' main counterpart in Latin America – Project Counselling Service (PCS). Nadia and Karen were among a group of thirty-five participants from Peru, Guatemala, and Colombia who spent a week together sharing their experiences with armed conflict, and learning about strategies of the victims' movement to push for redress.

The internal armed conflicts in Peru, Guatemala, and Colombia changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families. In Peru, between 1980 and 2000, over 69,000 people were killed or disappeared, and close to 600,000 internally displaced – mostly Quechua-speaking indigenous people. In Guatemala, the 36-year-long conflict that ended in 1996 left over 200,000 people killed or disappeared, and up to two million internally and externally displaced, most of them indigenous. In Colombia, though the conflict's intensity has diminished, and space to address reconciliation has opened through the demobilization of some paramilitary groups, leaders of communities and social movements continue to receive death threats, and civilians are forcibly displaced from their homes every day.

We participated in this exchange as part of Inter Pares' and PCS' joint regional program on truth, justice, and reparation (TJR). TJR refers to policies and programs used by societies and countries that have experienced armed conflict when, as part of reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts, they seek to redress the wrong-doings committed against their civilian population. These policies and programs may include reconstruction of collective memory of violations through Truth Commissions, access to the justice system to end impunity for those who committed crimes, and comprehensive reparation packages, including access to health, education, land title, and monetary compensation. The main objective of our program with PCS is to mentor victims' organizations to feel more confident and able to press their governments for justice and reparation on their own terms.



Participants of the regional exchange on truth, justice and reparation in front of the stone monument created in memory of victims of the armed conflict in Peru.

The week-long gathering was divided in two parts – a seminar and field visits. It provided opportunity for members of victims' organizations from the three countries to share personal experiences, learn about ongoing regional and national processes in other countries, and strengthen their motivation to continue seeking justice and reparation in hostile political climates. The seminar and field visits integrated small-group discussions as well as dancing and drawing to share experiences, struggles, and strategies in advocating for rights and reparation.

Among the participants were members of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR), an association of victims from Guatemala who have survived or lost loved ones in some of the most notorious massacres that occurred during the conflict. From Peru, no fewer than twelve victims' organizations attended, representing internally displaced families, women who were targets of political violence, wrongfully convicted political prisoners, and families of those

Taking Stock: Five Years of Seeking Reparations and Justice in Peru

In December 2007, the world witnessed a rare sight: a former president brought to justice for human rights violations. Alberto Fujimori, president of Peru during the latter decade of the country's armed conflict, was being tried for crimes he ordered the military to commit against his own people. Through his trial, Peruvians saw that even the most powerful person in the country could be brought to justice.

Despite this emblematic victory, which would be made even more significant later by a guilty verdict and 25-year prison sentence, the country was forced shortly thereafter to acknowledge the slow pace of achieving justice in Peru. On August 28, 2008, human rights organizations in Peru marked the fifth anniversary of the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) report, which documented the crimes and human rights violations committed over the twenty years of the conflict and offered recommendations to redress them. The anniversary was the culmination of a month of activities called the "CVR+5 campaign." It shed light on the advances made since the report's release, and generated public solidarity with the conflict's survivors and their demands for justice and reparation. Several of Inter Pares' counterparts took part in the campaign, which received national and regional media coverage. The campaign engaged the public and decision-makers on issues of justice and reparation through a range of activities, including educational sessions for students, human rights workshops for local

activists, public fairs, photo exhibits, and a public forum on advances made in the national reparations program.

As part of the campaign, the National Coordination of Human Rights Organizations, an Inter Pares counterpart, publicly denounced the slow implementation of the CVR's recommendations since the 2006 re-election of President García. García, Peru's president during the early years of the conflict, had criticized the CVR report when it was released. While several major advances were made in the first three years after the report's release, such as the creation of the Council of Reparation, progress has stalled since García's re-election, and financial resources for justice and reparation processes have dried up.

The CVR+5 campaign highlighted that justice and reparation for victims is not a priority for the Peruvian government. There is still a lot to do, such as exhuming mass graves to find bodies of the disappeared. Those fighting for justice understand that this is not the moment to lose hope. Some survivors have been waiting for more than twenty years to obtain it. With Inter Pares' financial and political support, our counterparts in Peru are central to the efforts to counter impunity and obtain comprehensive reparations. The impunity that still prevails, despite Fujimori's trial and guilty verdict, must be overcome to contribute to national reconciliation and to ensure a peaceful future in Peru. ✂

Rising From the Ashes



Peru's civil war, which raged from 1980 to 2000, killed more than 69,000 people, and left hundreds of survivors of sexual violence, primarily indigenous women. Hidden from view high in the Andes, the brutality of the conflict shocked Peruvians when it was revealed in the 2003 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) report. The CVR's evidence confirmed that during the armed conflict, rape was systematically used by the army as a weapon against civilian indigenous women. Yet while women suffered, the conflict also spurred them to take on new roles, often as community leaders.

Inter Pares and Project Counselling Service (PCS) have produced a 30-minute film, *Rising From the Ashes*, to share our work in Peru through the inspiring story of four indigenous women. As survivors and activists, through their organizations they are struggling to create a more just and peaceful society by seeking justice for past crimes, by providing mental health support to other survivors, and by promoting women's leadership within their communities. PCS and Inter Pares are proud to collaborate with these women and to share their stories.

Would you be interested in organizing a screening in your community, or living room for friends and family to raise awareness and funds for our work? If so, please contact Inter Pares at info@interpares.ca, or toll-free at (866) 563-4801, for a copy of the video and related materials. To attend or help publicize a screening, please visit www.interpares.ca/risingfromtheashes for dates and locations. ✂

Rising From the Ashes is available in English, French, and Spanish.

Breaking the Silence in the Search for Justice

From 1960 to 1996, a brutal civil war raged in Guatemala in which more than 200,000 people died. The war ended with the signing of Peace Accords, after which the United Nations-sponsored Historical Clarification Commission (CEH) spent two years documenting the atrocities of the war. The Commission's report, entitled "Guatemala: Memory of Silence," found the state responsible for 93% of the crimes committed during the conflict. The majority of the victims were indigenous. According to the Commission, this constituted genocide. The report made several recommendations, among them that the state provide economic reparations for victims and bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice.

February 25, 2009, marked the tenth anniversary of the report's release. Numerous events were organized to commemorate the anniversary and take stock of the progress over the last decade. The events were bittersweet. Important advances toward peace have been made, but the most important of all – justice – remains elusive. The intellectual and material authors of war crimes – those who developed plans and issued orders, and those who carried them out – largely remain unpunished, many of them enjoying lives of wealth and power.

One moment that captured this painful reality was when Guatemala's President, at a public commemoration for victims of the conflict, lauded the handover of military plans related to four major massacres in the early 1980s. In 2008, after years of legal battles by human rights organizations such as the Centre for Legal Action in Human Rights (CALDH), an Inter Pares counterpart, the Constitutional Court ruled that the secret military plans be made public. These documents are important evidence in the genocide case against former General Ríos Montt, the dictator in power during the years of the genocide – a case that CALDH is leading.

But as the President made his speech that day, the Minister of Defense was handing over only two of the four documents, stating that the other two had "disappeared." Such has been the struggle for justice in Guatemala – a slow march of hard-won victories that run up against seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

But from those hard-won victories emerge glimmers of hope. Victims of the conflict have organized themselves to challenge impunity in Guatemala, preserving collective memory of the genocide and demanding justice. One of these organizations, the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR), is playing a central role in emblematic cases such as the one against Ríos Montt. With the support of CALDH, the Association has organized witnesses to testify in this and other cases at the Inter-American Court and the Spanish National Court. The testimonies of these victims are tremendous acts of courage in a context of impunity and social silence about the war. Powerful interests ask victims to "forgive and forget," to avoid opening up old wounds that in reality have never healed. When victims break this silence, they risk their security and even their lives. The bravery of AJR members to speak out publicly and tell their stories is the result of years of work, supporting victims to organize

and building their skills so they can take on leading roles in their pursuit of justice.

The assistance CALDH has provided to the AJR has been central to the strengthening of the victims' movement in Guatemala. Legal strategies for prosecuting cases are developed by



CALDH graphic "Truth, Memory, Justice – Rights of all people".

CALDH in consultation with the Association, so that judicial processes always reflect the goals of the victims themselves and, as such, can contribute to the process of emotional healing. CALDH helped create a women's caucus inside the Association for women members to share their experiences of gender-based violence during the war and to articulate their demands for justice as part of the organization's agenda. CALDH supports the Association's work with youth, the children of victims, to ensure that the memory of the genocide – and the struggle for justice – is not forgotten. With Inter Pares' support, CALDH and the Association have had the opportunity to learn from struggles for justice in other countries in Latin America. All of this work has helped the Association become a recognized and influential social actor in Guatemala and has nurtured the courage of victims to speak out, confident in their ability to assert their right to justice. ✂



NADIA PAUCHER

Lidia Flores of Peru laying a rose to commemorate the anniversary of her husband's disappearance.

who were disappeared, killed, or tortured. From Colombia, participants represented the Movement of the Victims of Crimes Committed by the State (MOVICE), a coalition of grassroots organizations and NGOs.

Field visits also included moments to commemorate and honour victims of the conflicts. One such moment was when we visited the monument *El Ojo que Lloro* (“The Eye that Cries”). *El Ojo que Lloro*, a stone sculpture by Dutch artist Lika Mutal, was created in 2005 in memory of victims of the armed conflict in Peru. The sculpture represents *Pachamama* (Mother Earth); in its centre is a small stone, shaped like an eye, from which water continuously trickles. The sculpture is surrounded by a labyrinth of 32,000 pebbles, each bearing the name, age, and year of death or disappearance of a victim identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. The group was very moved when one of the participants, Lidia Flores, laid a rose on her husband’s stone to commemorate the anniversary of his disappearance.

El Ojo que Lloro was vandalized by former President Fujimori’s supporters in September 2007, following the announcement that he would be extradited to Peru to face trial for human rights violations. Orange paint – the colour of Fujimori’s party – was thrown on the monument, and pebbles crushed. The incident is indicative of the obstacles to justice and reparation in Peru, Guatemala and Colombia. Survivors face intolerance and resistance from those who prefer to forget what happened.

We also commemorated the 26th anniversary of the Plan de Sánchez massacre. On July 18, 1982, Guatemalan security forces surrounded the community of Plan de Sánchez and murdered 268 people. Only twenty people survived the massacre. One of them was Benjamin Gerónimo, an exchange participant, a founding member of the AJR and now its

president. The Centre for Legal Action for Human Rights (CALDH) took the case of the Plan de Sánchez massacre to the Inter-American level. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ruled unanimously that the Guatemalan state owed substantial economic and moral reparations to victims, including publicly asking survivors of the massacre for their forgiveness for crimes committed against them. The work of the AJR over the years, and the support it has received from CALDH, has made it a strong and confident organization, a respected and influential voice in the struggle for justice in Guatemala.

Our field visits included a stop at the association of internally displaced families in Pisco and Ica, where 50,000 to 150,000 people relocated during the conflict in Peru, fleeing violence in other parts of the country. They created an association in response to the discrimination and high levels of poverty they experienced in their new homes. After the earthquake of August 2007, the association supported their members to obtain title to the land where they were living in order to access government funding to reconstruct their houses.

During the exchange, we witnessed how mentoring and support from PCS and Inter Pares has helped the victims’ organizations establish their autonomy and political identity as active agents for change at the national and international level. We heard examples of the recognition given to victims’ organizations – from parliamentarians consulting the Peruvian Association of Women Affected by the Armed Conflict, to the IACHR granting a hearing requested by the Association of Innocent Released Prisoners, to the authoritative status given to the AJR’s public testimony during a genocide trial in Guatemala.

The victims’ movements in each of the three countries can now draw strength from the experience and solidarity that emerged from this journey, as histories were shared and relationships forged. The participants in the exchange see their new-found friends as allies in their struggles for justice as they continue to face their respective challenges to obtain truth, justice and reparation in their countries. ❧

 Inter Pares

ISSN 0715-4267

221 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 6P1
Phone (1-613) 563-4801 or (1-866) 563-4801 (toll free)
Fax (1-613) 594-4704 www.interpares.ca

With the support of thousands of Canadians, Inter Pares works in Canada and around the world with social change organizations who share the analysis that poverty and injustice are caused by inequities within and among nations, and who are working to promote peace, and social and economic justice in their communities and societies.

Charitable registration number (BN) 11897 1100 RR000 1.
Financial support for the *Bulletin* is provided by the Canadian International Development Agency.

DESIGN: DAVID BERMAN.COM

