



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Moira Feeney, Esq., Media Coordinator
415-544-0444 x302; mfeeney@cja.org

TRIAL AGAINST PERUVIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSER CONCLUDES IN MIAMI

PERPETRATOR HURTADO TAKES THE FIFTH, REFUSING TO FACE VICTIMS

Monday, Feb. 11, 2008, Miami, FL: A trial on damages was held today in federal court against former Peruvian Major Telmo Hurtado Hurtado for his role in the infamous Accomarca Massacre of 1985 in Peru.

Major Hurtado appeared in court by order of the judge in a prison jumpsuit and shackles. He is currently being held in an immigration detention center while he fights deportation to Peru. Major Hurtado refused to participate in the proceedings and invoked his right not to testify under the Fifth Amendment. Hurtado refused to listen to the testimony of the two plaintiffs, who are both survivors of the massacre and traveled to the U.S. to have their day in court.

The plaintiffs, Teófila Ochoa Lizarbe and Cirila Pulido Baldeón, who were 12 years old at the time, gave emotional testimony about the massacre where Major Hurtado and his men murdered 69 civilians in the remote mountain village of Accomarca. The plaintiffs each testified that they survived by hiding from the soldiers. Despite Ms. Ochoa Lizarbe's own escape, her mother, four brothers and a sister were killed. Soldiers also murdered Ms. Pulido Baldeón's mother and brother. The plaintiffs testified about life after such a devastating loss and their on-going struggle to heal.

In addition to the plaintiffs, Eduardo Gonzalez of the International Center for Transitional Justice and one of the authors of the Peruvian Truth Commission Report also testified. Mr. Gonzalez described how military patrol units, including the unit led by Major Hurtado, forced the villagers of Accomarca from their homes. The units took many of the women to a nearby field and raped them, then forced these unarmed civilians into a building, opened fire on the building, and ultimately burned it to the ground with the villagers inside.

"Operation Huancayoc," Gonzalez explained, conducted during the civil war between the government forces and insurgent groups, including Shining Path, was a military plan to "capture and destroy the terrorist elements present in the Quebrada de Huancayoc," a district of Accomarca in the Ayacucho region of Peru.

Former Peruvian Senator Javier Diez Conesco testified regarding the chilling statements that Major Hurtado made to a Senate investigative commission in 1985 in defense of his role in the massacre. Hurtado admitted that he threw a grenade into a building containing women, children and elderly villagers, and that he felt his actions were justified under orders he received to "capture and destroy" the enemy.

The hearing was before Federal District Court Judge Adalberto Jordan to determine the amount of damages to be awarded to Ms. Ochoa Lizarbe and Ms. Pulido Baldeón in the lawsuit that they brought against Major Hurtado for torture, extrajudicial killing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Judge Jordan previously granted a default judgment against Major Hurtado.

Major Hurtado came to the U.S. in 2002 after an amnesty law protecting him from prosecution in Peru was nullified.

The plaintiffs are represented by The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA), a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to ending torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law and advance the rule of law in countries transitioning from periods of abuse. www.cja.org.

For more information and background on the case, please visit <http://www.cja.org/cases/hurtado.shtml>.