



**For Immediate Release**

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## **CJA FILES LAWSUITS AGAINST FORMER PERUVIAN OFFICERS FOR WAR CRIMES AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY**

### **SURVIVORS SEEK ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CIVILIANS KILLED DURING THE ACCOMARCA MASSACRE**

*Miami, Florida and Greenbelt, Maryland; July 18, 2007:* The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) filed two human rights lawsuits on behalf of plaintiffs who survived the infamous Accomarca Massacre in Peru. The defendants, Telmo Hurtado Hurtado and Juan Rivera Rondón, are former Peruvian military officers who reside in the United States. Hurtado and Rivera Rondón commanded the military units responsible for the massacre of 69 innocent civilians in 1985.

These are the first human rights cases to be filed in the U.S. for atrocities committed against the civilian population in Peru during its civil war from 1980 through 2000. The defendants are charged with extrajudicial killing, torture, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to the complaint, while Rivera Rondón's troops blocked a nearby escape route, Hurtado and his soldiers went house to house forcibly removing villagers from their homes. The soldiers attacked and raped many of the women in the community. The troops forced scores of people, including several pregnant women and elderly residents, into two buildings. Hurtado ordered his troops to open fire on the buildings.

At the end of the day, 69 civilians were killed by the military.

The plaintiffs, Teófila Ochoa and Cirila Pulido, were 12 years old at the time and survived by hiding from the soldiers. Despite her own escape, Teófila Ochoa's mother, four brothers and a sister were killed. Soldiers murdered Cirila Pulido's mother and brother.

The Accomarca Massacre was committed during the civil war between the government of Peru and insurgent groups, including *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path). Throughout that time, the Peruvian Army and other government forces were responsible for widespread and systematic human rights abuses against the civilian population. According to Peru's Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, 26,259 civilians died or disappeared in the area surrounding Accomarca during the civil war.

Captain Rivera Rondón came to the U.S. in the early 1990s and owns a home in Montgomery County, Maryland. He is currently detained on immigration charges at the Dorchester County Detention Center in Cambridge, Maryland.

Major Hurtado came to the U.S. in 2002 after an amnesty law protecting him from prosecution in Peru was nullified. He is currently incarcerated at the Federal Detention Center in Miami after pleading guilty to two counts of immigration fraud.

The immigration charges against the defendants do not directly concern the killings in Accomarca or the defendants' role in human rights abuses in Peru.

CJA Executive Director Pamela Merchant explains, “Hurtado and Rivera Rondón have both evaded justice for too long and must be held to account for the atrocities that they committed against the civilian population in Peru. CJA's cases against Hurtado and Rivera Rondón seek to hold them accountable for the Accomarca massacre and to give a voice to the victims.”

The plaintiffs are both members of the Association of Relatives of the Victims of Political Violence in Accomarca (AFAVPDA) which was formed by the survivors of the massacre. AFAVPDA has been unsuccessful in its efforts to hold Rivera Rondón and Hurtado accountable in Peru.

Plaintiff Teófila Ochoa says, “My husband says that I am a fighter...that I am always fighting, and I say, of course, we need to fight, what else we can do? I want to make sure that nobody, no other child suffers what I had to suffer. I want a better life for my children, something that I believe is possible as long as the truth is told about what happened to our family and that justice is finally achieved.”

The claims are brought under two U.S. federal statutes, the Alien Tort Statute and the Torture Victim Protection Act, which permit victims of severe human rights abuses to seek redress in U.S. courts.

The cases, which are nearly identical, have been filed in two different federal courts based on the residency of the defendants. The case against Hurtado was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in Miami. The case against Rivera Rondón was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, Greenbelt Division.

CJA is 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.

For more information on the lawsuits against Hurtado and Rivera Rondón, see [www.cja.org](http://www.cja.org).

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