

PERU

Torture, "Disappearances" and Extrajudicial Executions

Serious human rights violations have been reported to be taking place in San Martin department since November 1987, when a state of emergency was imposed in seven provinces and a political/military command took control of the area.

The state of emergency was declared following a series of attacks on police posts by MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru) guerrillas. Since then the Political and Military Command has imposed severe restrictions on journalists and does not acknowledge the right of relatives, human rights organizations, and trade unions to request information on individual detainees. The press refers to the San Martin incidents as the "silent war."

According to a report from Amnesty International, the army initiated a counter-insurgency operation in San Martin in December 1987, apparently after the MRTA column had already left the area. A number of "disappearances" were

reported in December and January, mostly of farmers who were detained by the army or police. Amnesty International has received reports that peasant farmers in the area have been executed by members of the security forces. As in the other areas under emergency legislation, there appears to be widespread use of torture in the army barracks where prisoners are being held, particularly during the period before their detention is acknowledged. Peruvian human rights organizations have pointed out that, as in the other areas under states of emergency, only very few of those held in acknowledged detention, torture or "disappeared" appear to have had any direct link with the guerrilla groups. They believe that the main purpose of these actions is to intimidate the local population.

(This summarizes a 6-page document published by Amnesty International in April 1988.)



photo: Orin Starn

The family and community members mourn the death of a Quechua Indian who was kidnapped and killed by para-military forces.