



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Peru March 2021

Peru is home to one of South America's [largest Indigenous populations](#) who have lived in the Andean and Amazonian regions for centuries. From 1996 to 2000, under President Alberto Fujimori, [the Peruvian state performed](#) coercive sterilizations on 272,000 women and 22,000 men. State officials targeted rural, poor and Indigenous people for sterilization procedures through bribes, threats and deception and performed tubal ligations and vasectomies without informed consent. The state used demographic manipulation to limit the future births of Indigenous people, hence destroying a large proportion of an ethnic minority. According to Article II of the [1948 Genocide Convention](#), ratified by Peru in 1960, the *Programa de Salud Reproductiva y Planificación Familiar* (PSRPF) constitutes a genocide that remains unrecognized. PSRPF is also referred to as the *Programa Nacional de Población*.

The Fujimori administration claimed PSRPF would reduce maternal and infant mortality and empower women to make more informed choices. In reality, [Neo-Malthusian population notions](#) inspired the racist campaign which perceived Indigenous people as 'the cause of poverty', seeking to tackle economic downturn by reducing their numbers. The state [purposefully misinformed](#) candidates of the practice and its effects, even kidnapping and forcibly sterilizing some victims. [Severe malpractice](#) and dehumanization is evident in the use of quotas and financial incentives which encouraged coercive practices and abuses of power. Health practitioners did not speak Indigenous languages or provide translators, heightening the misleading nature of the procedures. Additionally, a total lack of postoperative care or adequate use of anesthetics often led to health complications and to the [deaths of 18 women](#). Survivors report serious mental and physical trauma, with victims struggling to bear the social stigma of infertility or return to their daily duties after invasive surgeries.

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 2000 to investigate the 69,000 deaths and disappearances caused by Peru's [internal armed conflict](#) (1980-2000). However, the final report made no connection between the sterilizations and genocide, likely because [the genocide did not arise from the fighting](#) between the state and armed left-wing opposition groups. The sterilizations are considered crimes of sexual violence or human rights abuses at most. Slow, tumultuous and limited court proceedings impede justice efforts. Fujimori received a 25-year prison sentence in 2007 for murder and kidnapping relating to his control of the Grupo Colina death squad. However, in 2017 Fujimori received a Presidential pardon. The Peruvian Supreme Court later revoked this pardon and ordered his return to prison. Charges were successfully reissued against Fujimori in [April 2018](#) for his role in the sterilization campaign, although not for genocide.

Today, the government's continued apathy towards Indigenous Peruvians is cause for alarm. In April 2020, eight Peruvian Indigenous representatives wrote to the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights warning that they are at [risk of 'ethnocide by inaction'](#) from the threat of COVID-19. When Spanish conquistadors arrived in Peru in 1533, they brought with them violent subjugation and [diseases](#) novel to the region, devastating the Indigenous Inca population, weakened by a pre-colonial civil war and smallpox epidemic. Indigenous rights NGO '[Survival International](#)' reports nearly half of the Nahua people died following Shell's incursions onto their land in the 1980's. Logging, gas and oil corporations continue to threaten Indigenous lives as resource demands increase the number of [land invasions and murders](#). [Violence against women](#), abuses by security forces, threats to freedom of expression, corruption, [political turmoil](#) and violence also remain [major concerns](#) in Peru.

Genocide Watch considers Peru to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination** and **Stage 10: Denial** due to the maintenance of socioeconomic inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peruvians and the state's failure to denounce PSRPF as genocidal or prosecute its architects for crimes of genocide.

Genocide Watch recommends the following:

- The Peruvian government must guarantee the rights to truth, justice and reparations for victims of forced sterilizations and acknowledge the crimes as acts of genocide publicly.
- Fund organizations like Survival International and the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDASEP) which represent and protect Indigenous interests.
- The systematic abandonment of Indigenous Peruvians must be rectified by improving state protections in rural areas and directly consulting villagers about their needs to ensure their voices are heard.