

Peru: Extremism and Terrorism

In October 2014, a Lebanese citizen named Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar was arrested in Lima, Peru, on suspicion of planning attacks on behalf of Hezbollah. In his apartment, authorities discovered explosive materials, gunpowder, and detonators, as well as photographs of popular tourist locations, critical infrastructure, the Israeli embassy in Lima, and Jewish cultural centers in Peru. In custody, Hamdar confessed that he was a member of Hezbollah's External Security Organization. He was charged with conspiracy to commit terrorism and document forgery, as he had entered Peru on a fraudulent passport. (Sources: [Perú21](#), [Perú21](#), [Hill](#), [Times of Israel](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [U.S. Congressional Testimony](#))

In April 2017, Hamdar was sentenced to six years in prison on the document forgery charge. However, he was cleared of the more serious terrorism charge due to a purported lack of evidence. Nonetheless, that October, Peru's Judiciary annulled the decision to absolve him of the terrorism charge and ordered him to undergo another trial. (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [Foreign Affairs](#), [Radio Programas del Perú](#), [Exitosa Noticias](#))

Overview

Since the 1960s, Peru has dealt with one of the most violent terrorist threats in all of South America—the Maoist insurgent group Sendero Luminoso (“Shining Path”). In its aim to overthrow the Peruvian state and establish a communist regime in its place, Sendero Luminoso launched violent attacks targeting the Peruvian government and civilians. In 1980, Sendero Luminoso formally launched a war against the government that came to be known as Peru's Internal War on Terror. The group, which allegedly used machetes to kill its victims in order to “save ammunition,” seized control of several rural areas in Peru and quickly became infamous for its brutal rule. Sendero Luminoso was estimated to be responsible for more than half of the 70,000 deaths—including more than 10,000 civilian deaths—that resulted from the conflict, which lasted until 2000. However, the Peruvian state also committed numerous human rights violations in its own counterterrorism operations. The government of Alberto Fujimori authorized anti-communist death squads in the early 1990s, and the military killed civilians en masse on multiple occasions. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [PBS](#), [Reuters](#), [El Mundo](#))

Sendero Luminoso's capabilities diminished significantly after Peruvian authorities captured its leader, Abimael Guzmán, in 1992, and thousands of fighters surrendered under a government amnesty program. Nonetheless, the group continued to carry out violent operations throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, including attacks against U.S. targets. In the past decade, the group has mainly retained influence in the rural area of Peru known as the Valley of the Apurímac, Ene, and Mataro Rivers (Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mataro, or VRAEM), where it has continued to carry out attacks against law enforcement and civilian workers. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [El Mundo](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#))

During the Internal War on Terror, the Peruvian state also aimed to combat a second threat, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, or MRTA). The MRTA—a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organization that aimed to establish a Marxist regime in Peru and remove all foreign elements from the state—conducted several violent attacks against Peruvian and foreign targets in the 1980s. Although hundreds of MRTA militants surrendered or were killed or captured in the early 1990s, the group carried out its most notorious operation—a four-month long hostage crisis—beginning in December 1996. However, the group has not carried out a significant attack since. (Sources: [Federation of American Scientists](#), [New York Times](#), [CIA](#))

In recent years, the Iranian regime and Hezbollah have attempted to expand their radical Shiite ideology to Peru. Peruvian indigenous rights activist Edwar Quiroga Vargas is a key figure attempting to propagate Iranian influence in Peru. In 2012, he established Inkarrí-Islam, a Shia Islamic cultural center that reportedly propagates radical anti-Semitic views, in the Apurímac region with support from the Iranian government and Hezbollah-linked individuals. Hezbollah itself reportedly maintains a presence in Apurímac and has even been reported to collaborate with Sendero Luminoso there. In October 2014, a member of Hezbollah's External Security Organization named Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar was arrested in Lima. Although authorities found explosive materials and photographs of potential attack targets in his apartment, he was absolved of a terrorism charge due to a purported lack of evidence. However, in October 2017, Peru's Judiciary annulled the decision to absolve him of the charge and ordered him to undergo another trial. (Sources: [RealClearDefense](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [Radio Programas del Perú](#), [Exitosa Noticias](#))

Another Peruvian militant organization present in Apurímac is the Plurinational Association of Reservists of the Tahuantinsuyo (Asociación Plurinacional de Reservistas del Tahuantinsuyo, or ASPRET), which seeks the return of indigenous Inca control to Peru's government and society.

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ASPRET has been involved in violent clashes at political demonstrations throughout the country. The group allegedly maintains ties to Inkarri-Islam, and reportedly formed an alliance with Sendero Luminoso in April 2018. (Sources: [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Enlace Judío](#), [Exitosa Noticias](#))

According to the U.S. Department of State, Peru has “steadily improved its ability to detect, deter, and respond to terrorist incidents” in the years since the capture of Guzmán. Peru has several counterterrorism laws in place that criminalize terrorist acts, conspiracy to commit terror, and collaboration with terrorists. Peru’s military and police both have counterterrorism units, which continue to carry out counterterrorism operations against Sendero Luminoso in the VRAEM. Peru also has a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and a national plan to counter money laundering and terrorist financing. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Peru participates in the counterterrorism initiatives of several multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, Organization of American States, and the Union of South American Nations. Peru is a member of the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America, and it has also specifically worked with the United States to improve its counterterrorism practices. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Recent public opinion surveys suggest that Peruvians continue to view Sendero Luminoso as an active threat, and have little faith in the government’s ability to combat the group. According to a 2018 survey by the research firm Ipsos, 65 percent of Peruvians view Sendero Luminoso as a “serious threat,” and 25 percent view it as a “moderate threat.” A 2017 survey by the research firm Datum revealed that 80 percent of Peruvians believed that the Peruvian government would not be prepared for a resurgence of terrorism (Sources: [Gestión](#), [Perú 21](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Sendero Luminoso and Peru’s Internal War on Terror

Sendero Luminoso (“Shining Path”) is a Marxist-Leninist and Maoist insurgent group that was established in Peru in 1960 by Abimael Guzmán as an armed offshoot of the Peruvian Communist Party. The group, which aimed to overthrow the Peruvian government and establish a communist state in its place, launched violent attacks that targeted the Peruvian state, wealthy locals, and suspected civilian supporters of the government, and quickly became one of the deadliest threats in South America. In addition to carrying out attacks, Sendero Luminoso became heavily involved in drug trafficking with the assistance of Colombia’s Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC). (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [BBC News](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación](#))

Sendero Luminoso formally launched a war against the Peruvian government in 1980, which came to be known as Peru’s Internal War on Terror. The group was able to gain support from peasants in rural areas neglected by the government, and at the height of its power in the 1980s, had over 10,000 followers. Sendero Luminoso seized complete control of several rural areas in Peru, collecting funds through forced taxation. The group, which allegedly used machetes to kill its victims in order to “save ammunition,” quickly became infamous for its brutal rule and systemic human rights abuses. In one of its most notorious attacks, in April 1983, Sendero Luminoso killed 69 peasants in Lucanamarca, Peru, using machetes, axes, knives, firearms, and boiling water in retaliation for the murder of one of its leaders the previous month. The group also conducted numerous bombing and firearm attacks targeting civilians in Lima throughout the decade. According to Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was established to determine the extent of abuses committed during the war, Sendero Luminoso was responsible for more than half of the 70,000 deaths—including more than 10,000 civilian deaths—that resulted from the conflict between 1980 and 2000. At the same time, however, the Peruvian government was also criticized for numerous human rights violations committed against civilians in its own counterterrorism operations, such as a massacre of 123 peasants—including several women and children—carried out by the military in the Huanta region, which was under Sendero Luminoso control, in December 1984. Alberto Fujimori, Peru’s president from 1990 to 2000, authorized anti-communist death squads that killed a total of 25 people in 1992. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación](#), [Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [PBS](#), [Reuters](#), [El Mundo](#))

Sendero Luminoso’s capabilities diminished significantly after authorities captured Guzmán in 1992. Furthermore, in the following two years, approximately 6,000 fighters surrendered under a government amnesty program. Nonetheless, the group continued to carry out violent operations throughout the 1990s, including two attacks targeting Jewish community leaders in Lima. In 1997, Sendero Luminoso was designated as a terrorist organization by the United States. In 2002, the group launched a bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Lima that killed six people. However, its capabilities continued to diminish as many more of its leaders were arrested in the 1990s and early 2000s. Guzmán was sentenced to life in prison in 2006. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [El Mundo](#), [New York Times](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#))

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Since 2006, Sendero Luminoso has retained influence in the rural area of Peru known as the Valley of the Apurímac, Ene, and Mataro Rivers (Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mataro, or VRAEM), where it has continued to carry out attacks against police officers and workers and participate in drug trafficking operations. There have also been reports of the group's alleged links to Hezbollah in recent years. In October 2016, a Peruvian citizen was killed by a sniper during a protest against an Apurímac copper mine. After the incident, Peruvian Congresswoman Luciana León asked the country's Minister of the Interior to investigate whether Sendero Luminoso and Hezbollah infiltrated the protest and cooperated in the attack, and whether the two groups maintain a relationship in Apurímac. (Sources: [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)

The Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, MRTA) was a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group established in Peru in 1983. It emerged from a prior Marxist-Leninist guerrilla movement called the Movement of the Revolutionary Left that had been active in the 1960s. In its aim to establish a Marxist regime in Peru and remove all foreign and imperialist elements from the state, the MRTA conducted bombings, kidnappings, ambushes, and assassinations against Peruvian and foreign targets in the country. The group launched several deadly attacks against U.S. targets in Lima, including a bombing of a U.S. Marine security guard residence in 1983, a machine-gun assault on the American Embassy in 1984, and additional attacks targeting American fast food restaurants and banks. The MRTA generated its funds through bank robberies, kidnappings, and extortions, and also received logistical support from Cuba and Libya. (Sources: [Federation of American Scientists](#), [New York Times](#), [CIA](#))

MRTA reportedly had up to 3,000 members at the height of its power in the late 1980s. However, the Peruvian government began to direct counterterrorism operations against the MRTA as part of Peru's Internal War on Terror. Hundreds of MRTA militants were captured or voluntarily surrendered to a government amnesty program in the 1990s. Furthermore, the MRTA came into conflict with the Maoist guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso when it attempted to expand into rural areas of Peru. It was likely that "more [MRTA] guerrillas were killed by [Sendero Luminoso] than by Peru's police" in the early 1990s, according to the *New York Times*. Nonetheless, the MRTA carried out one of its most notorious operations in December 1996 when 14 MRTA militants occupied the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima and took 72 hostages. The crisis continued for four months until Peruvian forces were able to rescue 71 of the hostages and kill all 14 MRTA militants in April 1997. With reportedly less than 100 core members by the end of the decade, the MRTA ceased its violent operations, instead choosing to focus on securing the release of imprisoned MRTA members. (Sources: [Federation of American Scientists](#), [New York Times](#), [CIA](#))

Hezbollah and Shiite Extremism

In recent years, the Iranian regime and Hezbollah have attempted to expand their radical Shiite ideology to Peru. Edwar Quiroga Vargas, a Peruvian indigenous rights activist and convert to Shia Islam, is a key figure attempting to propagate Iranian influence in Peru. In 2009, Quiroga Vargas studied in Iran for three months with Mohsen Rabbani, an Iranian operative and key planner of the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. In 2012, Quiroga Vargas established Peru's first Shia Islamic cultural center, Inkarri-Islam, in the city of Abancay in the Apurímac region—where most of the population is of indigenous Incan heritage. Inkarri-Islam, whose establishment was reportedly sponsored by the Iranian regime and Hezbollah-linked individuals, promotes radical Shiite views as part of former Iranian Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini's vision to attain a unified, global Islamic state governed by sharia law. The center reportedly ties Shia Islamic narratives to indigenous Incan narratives in an attempt to cultivate popular support. However, it also reportedly promotes an anti-Semitic agenda, calling for the liberation of the Incas from "Zionist colonization." In addition to Inkarri-Islam, Quiroga Vargas has reportedly opened an additional five cultural centers across Peru, and operates an Iranian-Incan Cultural Exchange program through which he has overseen the travel of at least 25 students to study with Rabbani in Iran. (Sources: [RealClearDefense](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#))

Hezbollah also reportedly has a presence in Apurímac. Quiroga Vargas reportedly regularly hosts Hezbollah individuals in the region, and in July 2016, established a political party there called Partido de Dios—a direct translation to "Party of God" or "Hezbollah." There have also been reports of Hezbollah links to the communist guerrilla Sendero Luminoso. In October 2016, a Peruvian citizen was killed by a sniper during a protest against an Apurímac copper mine. After the incident, Peruvian Congresswoman Luciana León asked the country's Minister of the Interior to investigate whether Hezbollah and Sendero Luminoso infiltrated the protest and cooperated in the attack, and whether Inkarri-Islam serves to facilitate a relationship between the two groups. (Sources: [RealClearDefense](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Al Arabiya](#))

In October 2014, a Lebanese citizen named Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar was arrested in Lima on suspicion of being a member of Hezbollah and planning attacks on behalf of the group. In his apartment, authorities discovered explosive materials, gunpowder, and detonators, as well as

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photographs of popular tourist locations, critical infrastructure, the Israeli embassy in Lima, and Jewish cultural centers in Peru. Hamdar had been questioned by counterterrorism authorities and placed under official surveillance upon his entry into the country in July 2014. In custody, Hamdar confessed that he was a member of Hezbollah's External Security Organization. Additionally, Hamdar's wife, a dual U.S.-Peruvian citizen named Carmen Carrión Velas, was arrested in November 2015 on the charge of collaborating with a terrorist group due to suspicions that she had only married Hamdar to facilitate his entry into Peru, but she was later released due to a lack of evidence. (Sources: [Politico](#), [Perú21](#), [Perú21](#), [Hill, Times of Israel](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [Radio Programas del Perú](#), [El Comercio](#), [U.S. Congressional Testimony](#))

In October 2016, Hamdar was formally charged with conspiracy to commit terrorism and document forgery, as he had entered Peru on a fraudulent passport. The same month, he was also designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. In April 2017, Hamdar was convicted of the document forgery charge and sentenced to six years in prison. However, he was cleared of the more serious terrorism charge due to a purported lack of evidence. Nonetheless, that October, Peru's Judiciary annulled the decision to absolve him of the terrorism charge and ordered him to undergo another trial. (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Foreign Affairs](#), [Radio Programas del Perú](#), [Exitosa Noticias](#))

Plurinational Association of Reservists of the Tahuantinsuyo

The Plurinational Association of Reservists of the Tahuantinsuyo (Asociación Plurinacional de Reservistas del Tahuantinsuyo, or ASPRET) is a Peruvian militant organization associated with the Ednocacerita political movement, which seeks the return of indigenous Inca control to Peru's government and society. ASPRET, which operates in Apurímac and other areas in rural Peru as well as in Lima, has been involved in violent clashes at political demonstrations throughout the country. The group allegedly maintains ties to notorious drug traffickers, the militant groups Sendero Luminoso and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), and the Hezbollah- and Iran-linked Peruvian cultural center Inkarrí-Islam. There have been reports that Edwar Quiroga Vargas, Inkarrí-Islam's leader, is himself a member of ASPRET. In April 2018, ASPRET and Sendero Luminoso reportedly formed an alliance called the United Revolutionary Andean Democratic Front of Peru, with the aim of imposing socialism in the country. (Sources: [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Enlace Judío](#), [Exitosa Noticias](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

- ASPRET and Sendero Luminoso reportedly form an alliance called the United Revolutionary Andean Democratic Front of Peru, with the aim of imposing socialism in the country.
Source: [Exitosa Noticias](#)
- The April 2017 decision to clear Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar of a terrorism charge is annulled by Peru's Judiciary. Hamdar is ordered to undergo a new trial. Source: [Exitosa Noticias](#)
- Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar is convicted of a document forgery charge and sentenced to six years in prison. However, he is cleared of a conspiracy to commit terrorism charge due to a purported lack of evidence. Source: [Radio Programas del Perú](#)
- **October 14, 2016:** A Peruvian citizen is killed by a sniper during a protest against the Las Bambas copper mine in the city of Abancay. Peruvian Congresswoman Luciana León asks the country's Ministry of the Interior to investigate possible cooperation between Hezbollah and Sendero Luminoso in the attack. Sources: [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Al Arabiya](#)
- Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar is designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the U.S. Department of Treasury on October 20 for his support of Hezbollah and attempt to carry out an attack in Peru. He is also formally charged with conspiracy to commit terrorism and document forgery in Peru. Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Foreign Affairs](#)
- Edwar Quiroga Vargas establishes a political party in Peru called Partido de Dios—a direct translation to “Party of God” or “Hezbollah.”
Sources: [RealClearDefense](#), [Al Arabiya](#)
- **April 9, 2016:** Sendero Luminoso ambushes a military patrol near the town of Matichacra that is traveling to provide polling security for the next day's general elections. The attack kills eight soldiers and two civilians and injures five additional soldiers. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **April 9, 2016:** Sendero Luminoso attacks a naval patrol on the Apurímac River in the Ayacucho region, injuring two Peruvian Marines. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- Carmen Carrión Vela, the wife of Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar, is arrested on the charge of collaborating with a terrorist group, as authorities suspect that she married Hamdar only to facilitate his entry into Peru. She is later released due to lack of evidence. Sources: [El Comercio](#), [Radio Programas del Perú](#)
- **October 28, 2014:** Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar is arrested in Lima on suspicion of being a member of Hezbollah and planning attacks on behalf of the group. Authorities discover photographs in his apartment of potential attack targets in Peru, and find explosive materials in his apartment and trash. In custody, Hamdar confesses that he is a member of Hezbollah's External Security Organization. Sources: [Perú21](#), [Perú21](#), [U.S. Department of](#)

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[the Treasury](#)

- Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar returns to Peru after spending time in Brazil. He is questioned by counterterrorism authorities and put under official surveillance. Source: [Politico](#)
 - Lebanese citizen and Hezbollah operative Muhammad Ghaleb Hamdar enters Peru and marries dual U.S.-Peruvian citizen Carmen Carrión Vela. Sources: [Politico](#), [El Comercio](#)
 - Edwar Quiroga Vargas establishes Inkarrí-Islam, Peru's first Shia Islamic cultural center, in the city of Abancay in Apurímac region of Peru, reportedly with support from the Iranian government and Hezbollah-linked individuals. Inkarrí-Islam promotes an anti-Semitic agenda and radical Shiite views as part of former Iranian Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini's vision to attain a unified, global Islamic state governed by sharia law. Sources: [RealClearDefense](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#), [Al Arabiya](#)
 - Peruvian indigenous rights activist Edwar Quiroga Vargas converts to Shia Islam and studies in Iran for three months with Mohsen Rabbani, an Iranian operative and key planner of the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. Sources: [RealClearDefense](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#)
 - Sendero Luminoso kills five Peruvian police officers and two workers from the National Coca Company. Source: [Council on Foreign Relations](#)
 - **October 13, 2006:** Captured Sendero Luminoso leader Abimael Guzmán is sentenced to lifetime imprisonment. Sources: [New York Times](#), [El Mundo](#)
 - **December 20, 2005:** Sendero Luminoso assassinates eight police members in the zone of Aucayacu. Source: [El Mundo](#)
 - **March 21, 2002:** Sendero Luminoso launches a car bombing outside of the U.S. Embassy in Lima two days before President George W. Bush is scheduled to arrive. The attack kills nine people. Sources: [CNN](#), [Guardian](#), [El Mundo](#)
 - **October 8, 1997:** The United States designates Sendero Luminoso as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
 - - : MRTA militants occupy the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima, taking 72 hostages. Four months later, Peruvian forces rescue all but one hostage and kill all 14 MRTA militants involved. Source: [Federation of American Scientists](#)
 - **August 18, 1993:** Sendero Luminoso kills 65 people in the town of Junín, Peru. Source: [El Mundo](#)
 - **September 12, 1992:** Peruvian authorities capture the leader of Sendero Luminoso, Abimael Guzmán. The group's capabilities decline after his capture. Source: [New York Times](#)
 - **July 16, 1992:** Sendero Luminoso launches a double bombing attack on the busy Tarata street of Lima's business district that kills 25 people and injures dozens more. Source: [BBC News](#)
 - Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori authorizes anti-communist death squads that kill a total of 25 people during the year. Sources: [PBS](#), [Reuters](#)
 - The MRTA bombs a total of four Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant on two separate dates, injuring a total of ten people. The MRTA also launches an assault on the Peruvian security company that provides security for the U.S. Embassy in Lima, killing two and wounding seven others. Source: [CIA](#)
 - The MRTA detonates a car bomb in the parking lot of the Jorge Chavez International Airport in Lima on January 25, killing two individuals and injuring 10 others. The group also launches firearm and bombing assaults on the U.S. Embassy in Lima and the U.S./Peruvian Bi-National Center, but those attacks do not inflict any casualties. Source: [CIA](#)
 - **July 24, 1990:** Alleged Sendero Luminoso militants fire at Yaakov Hazon, secretary of the Jewish community of Lima, several times from a passing vehicle. Hazon is seriously wounded. Sources: [Times of Israel](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#)
 - **December 18, 1990:** A bomb explodes under the car of a Jewish individual parked near a synagogue in Lima. Sendero Luminoso claims responsibility. Sources: [Times of Israel](#), [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism](#)
 - **August 14, 1985:** The Peruvian army kills 63 peasants in Accomarca. Source: [El Mundo](#)
 - The Peruvian military massacres 123 peasants—including several women and children—carried out by the military in the Huanta region, which is under Sendero Luminoso control. Source: [BBC News](#)
 - The MRTA launches a machine-gun assault on the U.S. Embassy in Lima. Source: [New York Times](#)
 - **November 13, 1983:** The Peruvian police kill 32 villagers at a wedding in the town of Socos. Source: [El Mundo](#)
 - The MRTA launches a bomb attack on the U.S. Marine security guard residence in Lima. Source: [CIA](#)
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- **April 3, 1983:** In what comes to be known as the Lucanamarca massacre, Sendero Luminoso brutally kills a total of 69 peasants in and around the town of Lucanamarca, Peru, in retaliation for the murder of one of their leaders the previous month. Peasants are killed with machetes, axes, knives, firearms, and boiling water. Source: [Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación](#)
- **January 26, 1983:** Sendero Luminoso assassinates eight journalists in Uchuraccay. Source: [El Mundo](#)
- **May 17, 1980:** On the eve of the Peruvian presidential election, Sendero Luminoso burns ballot boxes and voting lists in the town of Chuschi, officially launching its war against the Peruvian government. Sources: [Small Wars Journal](#), [El Mundo](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

During Peru's Internal War on Terror, which lasted from 1980 to 2000, the Peruvian government launched counterterrorism operations against the left-wing guerrillas Sendero Luminoso and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, or MRTA). Although Sendero Luminoso was estimated to be responsible for more than half of the 70,000 deaths that resulted from the war—including more than 10,000 civilian deaths, the Peruvian state and military also committed human rights violations against civilians in its own counterterrorism operations. In December 1984, Peruvian militants massacred 123 peasants—including several women and children—in the Huanta region, which was under Sendero Luminoso control. Alberto Fujimori, Peru's president from 1990 to 2000, has been credited with subjugating the threat posed by left-wing guerrillas, but has also been heavily criticized for the brutal methods which he used to do so. Over 6,000 Sendero Luminoso and MRTA militants surrendered under a government amnesty program in the 1990s, under the threat of harsh prison conditions if they ended up captured instead. Fujimori also authorized anti-communist death squads that killed a total of 25 people in 1992. Fujimori was sentenced to 25 years in prison in 2009 for the massacres, but was pardoned by the Peruvian government in 2017. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [El Mundo](#), [Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación](#), [PBS](#), [Reuters](#), [Canadian Broadcasting Company](#), [New York Times](#))

Peru passed its first laws criminalizing terrorism in 1992 in order to prosecute individuals associated with left-wing guerrilla groups. However, the laws, which allowed military tribunals to try civilians, were heavily criticized by human rights groups. In 2003, they were revised after Peru's highest court declared them to be unconstitutional, forcing a retrial of several individuals prosecuted under the first law, including Abimael Guzmán—the leader of Sendero Luminoso captured in 1992. Guzmán was resentenced to a life imprisonment in 2006. According to the U.S. State Department, Peru has “steadily improved its ability to detect, deter, and respond to terrorist incidents” in the years since the capture of Guzmán. Today, Peru's counterterrorism laws criminalize terrorist acts, conspiracy to commit terror, and any form of collaboration with terrorists, including economic collaboration. On February 16, 2016, Peru passed a law allowing citizens who provide information leading to the capture of members of criminal or terrorist organization to be granted compensation. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Washington Post](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [New York Times](#))

In recent years, Peru's military and police, both of which have counterterrorism units, have continued to carry out counterterrorism and counter-narcotics operations against Sendero Luminoso in the VRAEM. The Peruvian government has also spent about \$6 billion on infrastructure and health and education services in the VRAEM since 2007 in an effort to end Sendero Luminoso's influence there. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Peru has a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) as well as a national plan to counter money laundering and terrorist financing, which it developed and worked to implement after its 2008 Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT) evaluation. The plan aimed to make Peru's anti-money laundering/counter-terrorist financing compliant with GAFILAT's recommendations. In May 2016, Peru approved a law that gives its FIU the authority to immediately seize assets belonging to organizations and individuals on the United Nations Security Council ISIS and al-Qaeda sanctions list. Peru's National Police also has a specialized unit that works to combat Sendero Luminoso's illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, that contribute to its finances. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Superintendencia de Banca, Seguros y AFP](#))

International Counter-Extremism

Peru participates in the counterterrorism initiatives of several multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, Organization of American States and its Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, and the Union of South American Nations. Peru is a member of the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT), and its domestic Financial Intelligence Unit is a member of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units. In its 2008 assessment of Peru, GAFILAT highlighted several gaps in Peru's anti-money launder/counter-terrorist financing (AML/CTF) legislation, and only deemed the country to be fully compliant with 10 out of 49 recommendations. Peru has since worked to improve its AML/CTF

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legislation, and is in the process of undergoing another GAFILAT assessment as of 2018. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Superintendencia de Banca, Seguros y AFP](#), [Superintendencia de Banca, Seguros y AFP](#))

Peru has also specifically worked with the United States to improve its counterterrorism practices. For example, in 2015, Peru participated in the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, and in 2017, Peru and the United States hosted a workshop in Lima on best practices to counter Hezbollah. Peru's Foreign Ministry has also publicly condemned terrorist attacks around the world. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Public Opinion

Recent public opinion surveys suggest that Peruvians continue to view Sendero Luminoso as an active threat, and have little faith in the government's ability to combat the group. According to a 2018 survey published by the research firm Ipsos, 64 percent of Peruvians believe that Sendero Luminoso is still active, and 25 percent even believe that the group is increasing in size, while only 6 percent believe that it has been completely defeated. The same survey also revealed that 65 percent of Peruvians view Sendero Luminoso as a "serious threat," 25 percent view it as a "moderate threat," and only 8 percent do not consider the group to be a threat at all. (Source: [Gestión](#))

After several notorious members of Sendero Luminoso were released from imprisonment in 2017, 67 percent of Peruvians believed there would be a resurgence of terrorism, according to a survey conducted by the Peruvian research firm Datum. Additionally, 80 percent of Peruvians believed that the Peruvian government would not be prepared if such a resurgence were to take place. (Source: [Perú 21](#))

After some members of Peru's Congress suggested in April 2018 that imprisoned former Sendero Luminoso leader Abimael Guzmán be granted an official pardon, an Ipsos survey revealed that 89 percent of Peruvians disagreed with the proposition. Guzmán was ultimately not granted a pardon. (Sources: [La República](#), [Gestión](#), [El Comercio](#))