Interviewee JC

Michelle: Great, so first please give an introduction of yourself.

Juan: Okay, my name is Juan Carlos la Puente, I’ve been working on Human Rights (…) since 15 uhm (…) more than 15 years (…) I stared working on Human Rights in Latin America. I was working on Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia. Uhm, part of my work (….) last like six years in Colombia (…) I was (…) peace brigade team coordinator in Colombia, working with uhm about 40 people in (…) with different offices protecting Human Rights defenders in Columbia. Then I started since January here in Amnesty International in Peru.

Well (…) my studies, do you wanna hear about my studies?

Michelle: Yeah.

Juan: Well my studies are university (laughing). Uhm well I studied uhm industrial engineer first and then I made a (…) master degree in business administration and then I decided to work with vulnerable people instead of working for big cooperate companies. So (…) I started studying uhm social science philosophy (…) even uhm (…) religious studies master (…) a master in religious studies. Uhm, about Human Rights well, my master degree in social science and all the work I’ve done is my experience at this moment, but I keep learning of course.

Is it all right my English?

Michelle: It’s very good. And what is your position here in… (Amnesty International)?

Juan: Director

Michelle: Director, great. So what is your general opinion about Fujimori?

Juan: My general opinion about Fujimori, uhm I think he awake some hope in people at the beginning but he, at the end he, not at the end; during his government (…) he destroyed (…) the democratic institutions (…) he destroyed different leaderships in the regions, uhm and he centralized the power in the president uhm well he has been condemned because of Human Rights violations.

Michelle: Can you tell me something about his results of being a president, if to you there has been positive or negative

Juan: Uhm from the Human Rights situation I would say negative. And from other parts I don’t want to say anything about that but I would like to say that a lot of people prays his victory against *‘el Sendero Luminoso’* (the Shining Path), but I think that it’s very difficult to give him the (…) achievements in that battle because the police was in charge (…) the military was in charge of some parts no, so and he, there is the risk that people (…) the president achievements of other people for him. So I don’t want to say about if he destroyed *‘el Sendero Luminoso’*, if he was, but what we know is that he committed Human Rights violations uhm in the context of the conflict but he committed violation because he destroyed civil population. And well he created the corrupting system, centralizing him, and with Montesinos.

Michelle: Great so, you just told me that you have been here in Amnesty since January.

Juan: Yes.

Michelle: Uhm, my next question is: How did Amnesty experience the presidency of Fujimori? And I know that you were not working here but do you have an idea how they reacted to his, for example Human Rights violations; what did they do about it?

Juan: Well Amnesty International was supporting the cases of victims during the Fujimori-period, helping the Truth-Commission, giving information to the Truth-commission, uhm and (…) doing urgent actions in order to safe people during the Fujimori-period no, and Amnesty International support the Truth-Commission recommendations. We agree with (…) the necessity of the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth-Commission here in Peru was a very great job.

Michelle: Which is?

Juan: The different recommendations? Well the reform of the police, the reform of (…) to provide people (…) economical reparations, symbolic reparations, create prosecute cases against (…) militants and other people in the (…) institutions of the states that committed violations. And the other thing about the Truth-Commission is, how do you say, that it highlights the (…) racism in Peru because 70% of the victims were in the mountains, and people from the coast didn’t know at the time or didn’t care about what was happening in the mountains, so the different forces, the security forces of the state were doing, were committing violations and also *‘el Sendero Luminoso’* not also; the main (…) perpetrator against Human Rights (…) were *‘el Sendero Luminoso’*, that’s what the Truth-Commision were saying. The other actors were security, state security forces. So, but people from the coast, from Lima, didn’t care about (…) what was happening in the mountains (…) as a sign about their racism in Peru.

Michelle: Great, so besides corruption and tapping on phones, Fujimori was sentenced 25 years for his violations on Human Rights for the two mascaras *‘la Cantuta’* y *‘Barios Altos’*. Uhm, from a Human Rights perspective, do you think it’s a fair sentence? 25 years.

Juan: Uhm yes, well (…) the sentence of Fujimori (…) we agree that the condemn is about Human Rights violations because he committed that (…) crime and it is very important not only link Fujimori to the, people said, the press, different information said about 15.000 million dollars he stole from the government of different ways. Uhm the condemn is about Human Rights and it’s important that the condemn is in Human Rights so people can understand that nobody (…) has the possibility to commit violations against Human Rights without a judge. That it’s coming in the future for him, right.

Michelle: So it’s a good thing.

Juan It’s a good thing and I (…) I’m not talking about if it’s a good thing for the people or for him, I’m not talking about the person, we are talking about (..) the society uhm and its good for anybody to know that nobody can commit that (knocking determined in the table) , yeah.

Michelle: And, as you probably know Fujimori has cancer and there has been talking about releasing him from house arrest. Do you think he should be released or stay?

Juan: The position, well (…) the position of Amnesty for that point (…) I don’t know I’m talking by myself or for Amnesty but the position of Amnesty right now for example of (…) this decision uhm is that *that* kind of decisions is part of the (…) the authorities of the (…) the national institute of jail system (..) a decision of the authorities if one person (..) is dying or something is happening in jail, that depends on the situation but (…) it depends on them but the position of Amnesty is that the condemnation has to be proportional to the violation he committed, just to take care of that, if somebody is gonna be released we have to think about the victims of the actions he committed and uhm it’s very important (…) to be aware (…) that we (…) it’s a sign to the society (…) what is happening with a guy that is committing violations. And so our position is not about if he has cancer or not it depends on the result, the medical result, the national authorities but Amnesty International always insists in that the condemnation and the sentence; the time in jail (…) has to be proportional to the victims (..) and the violations was very grave, it was a violation, a lot of people, systematic violation.

Michelle: Yeah exactly. Okay, so Fujimori has a daughter who was a candidate for the 2011 election. She wasn’t elected, but she said that if she was elected, she would ask for a pardon for her dad (…) through the system. And again, I know it didn’t happen but can you imagine if it would have happened and she would have (…) him released from jail. What could have happened for the society?

Juan: I think it’s a sign of impunity. Uhm if you want to built a trust in society in order to dialogue between all the citizens and (…) the state institutions. so if you don’t fight against impunity you are (…) nobody (…) impunity destroys the expectations of the (…) the democratic institutions. I know that the (…) well I hope (smiling) that the judge here in Peru is going to condemn if someone is going to destroy me or (…) effect my rights here. I expect from the democratic institutions that kind of actions. I expect from the president to protect Human Rights in Peru. I expect from the persecutor to do an investigation of criminals. So impunity destroys all those kind of expectations. Nobody knows what going to happen with the state, maybe the state is going to commit violations against me. Maybe if I don’t have the money, the police will be my hell or maybe if I don’t have the money to buy a judge uhm I’m gonna be in prison because (…) the whole system (…) is been destroyed, so fight against impunity is how to (…) okay so if you want to plant trust in society uhm you need to fight against impunity.

Now a days, uhm different actors are saying; we need dialogue about the different development editions here in Peru. Some people want mingling, other people don’t want mining (…) different visions about uhm development models. But other people say; *“how we can dialogue if in the past they did to me this (…) and nobody prosecuted them because there is impunity*”. So I think trust depends on fight against impunity and uhm if she would have, right? (…). Normally Amnesty International never say something about would have been because (…) we only do statements, as Amnesty, about facts (knocking determined in the table) in the present. But if you are asking me about uhm if now somebody said that uhm (…) I think it would be destroying (…) the trust no, in the democratic institutions.

Michelle: Yeah.

Juan: So it was a bad sign

Michelle Good. So…

Juan (adding to what he just stated): Said as a personal opinion!

Michelle (confirming): As personal opinion, great. So, Fujimori was the first democratically elected president in the world to have received, uhm to be in prison…

Juan: Sorry, can you start again please.

Michelle: Yeah. Fujimori was the first democratically elected president in the world who has been trialed and found guilty for crimes against Human Rights in his country…

Juan: Yeah.

Michelle:…the first president in the world. And there was an investigator at the time of the trial for the Human Rights Watch, called Maria McFarland, who said that this trial is gonna go down in history as a model for whole Latin America because of the symbol that he was the first one. Can you see if there has been any changes in, out from Human Rights perspectives, in the system in Peru, maybe in other countries, has this changed something this trial?

Juan: Yeah that’s the point of your research…

Michelle: Exactly.

Juan:… That’s the main point of your research. I think yes because what I said about trust, when people fight against impunity. Uhm it was a symbol that (…) the Peruvian institutions can manage that this problem and uhm we don’t need (…) at that time that another court, international court, has to be involved in the problem.

Michelle: For example Chile.

Juan: For example Chile, but, and Chile was about uhm more than (…) all the charges (…) but Fujimori about Human Rights violations that’s the important thing, uhm and Human Rights is important to this country (…) about when people say Human Rights they say *“yes”,* its not like well we’re talking about human Rights and *“aaargh”* that’s about a few organizations; no, people demand respect of their Human Rights, when people say that. And uhm (…) the authorities for example in last December, there was a proposal about (…) to do one amnesty for militants (…) that are prosecuting because of cases of Human Rights violations in the conflict period, okay. But they stopped with that kind of (…) uhm there was a (…) an initiative about the law to give an amnesty for that kind of people, for that people, for those people. Uhm but they (…) had to block the initiative because all the pressure of Human Rights again.

Michelle: So that’s a positive thing.

Juan: That’s a positive thing (…) I think that here in Peru uhm when people say (…) *“let’s do an amnesty for people who make violations against Human Rights”*, people say *“no”* because if we do that uhm in the future they are going to commit it again. And I think that Latin America, yes, it’s a symbol for whole Latin America government and I think that Argentina is doing a lot about (…) all the dictatorships, Brazil, uhm each country is doing their part uhm but about committing Human Rights I think it’s a symbol from our judge system.

Michelle: So do you think that the society has changes after this imprisonment of Fujimori?

Juan Yeah, uhm….

Michelle: Besides the Human Rights situation…

Juan: I know that your point is about the judge of Fujimori but I would like to (…) highlight that the importance of the Truth-Commission before the trial because the Truth-Commission did a very, very good work in the Media. A lot of people saw the situation of the victims (…) that we had denied in the past. As I told you, remember the coast and the mountain?

Michelle: Yeah.

Juan: Yeah okay, so the Truth-Commission did a very good work because they put in front of our faces of the people in the coast, the massacres, the situation, the testimonies of the victims so, a lot of people, I remember that from the uhm 2000 and more, a awake of all the racism and the discrimination and how the security forces of the state uhm had committed violations like people were nothing, right. And a lot of people said “*well it was a time of war (…) so in war you do a lot of things”* but the Truth-Commission give the information uhm give voices of the victims and we realized that (…) a lot of people realized at that time that ‘los carteles’ (the cartels) for the militants, that they violated; sexual violations against women, they killed children, that’s not about war, that’s (…) barbarism.

Michelle: Yeah.

Juan: So I think the (…) security argument, the importance of the security situation never, never hide the importance of Human Rights and I (…) and that’s the point about the trial of Fujimori because there was a lot of Media trying to (…) show that the trial (…) hadn’t followed a fair process. Because a lot of people said *“no, he committed, no?”* no and (…) Human Rights are important here in Peru, so they have to do a research and everything.

Michelle: So you think that the Truth-Commission had a…

Juan: Given the environment because (…) judges uhm I don’t know if it’s the judges but the power of a society (…) the climate that creates the democratic institutions giving support about the sense of a situation. (…) I don’t know if the society manipulates a judge, I don’t think that, I’m not saying that but creates a power (…) because here there is a lot of power people but the democratic institution was a strength in this environment about the Truth-Commission I think. It’s very important the Truth-Commission. And now, for example if you ask uhm youth people, a lot of people didn’t know, didn’t remember (…) what happened during the conflict (..) and the Truth-Commission said that we have to keep in memory this situation, so the museum of memory, all these things are very important now and we support all that kind of initiatives, to keep in mind what human beings can do if we don’t stop them or we don’t give a frame about Human Rights.

Michelle: Great. Well I don’t have any more questions, but do you have something to add? anything you would like to add? Any comments?

(…)

Juan: Yeah I would like to highlight the Truth-Commission part, that maybe you’re starting with the point of your; the judge of Fujimori but you have to think about what strengths, of the whole trial that is going to the point: The Truth-Commission.

And the other thing, is that now the effect I that, the awareness about Human Rights here in Peru is uhm and the awakens of the leadership in the regions, that are starting again, for example Cajamarca, have you seen that? (Referring to context of sterilizing women: wasn’t said on tape but we talked about it after).

Michelle: I have been there yes.

Juan: Yes and the president of the region in the past, during Fujimori, nothing like that could happen.

Michelle: No because it was a centralized government

Juan: A very, very centralized government. So the centralization in Peru has, uhm, Human Rights empowered also. Yes

Michelle: Yes.

Juan: Yes

Michelle: Great, thank you.