



# Exposing Impunity: Memory and Human Rights Activism in Indonesia and Argentina

Katharine McGregor

To cite this article: Katharine McGregor (2017) Exposing Impunity: Memory and Human Rights Activism in Indonesia and Argentina, Journal of Genocide Research, 19:4, 551-573, DOI: [10.1080/14623528.2017.1393948](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2017.1393948)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2017.1393948>



© 2017 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 22 Dec 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 222



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Exposing Impunity: Memory and Human Rights Activism in Indonesia and Argentina

Katharine McGregor 

School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of a new sustained focus in Indonesian human rights activism on connecting historical experiences of violence to ongoing impunity, in order to assess what forms of memory activism are effective in breaking a justice impasse. It does so by using the much more successful case of Argentinian human rights activism for justice for the 1976–83 repression as a point of comparison. Soon after the end of authoritarian rule, Argentinians held a truth commission and trials of key military leaders. Then, following a period of stalled justice, activists were able to create a new societal consensus on the need for further redress including extended trials. In Indonesia, meanwhile, a proposed truth commission was abandoned and there have been no trials of military leaders, and no other forms of redress initiated by the government for this case. Despite the limitations of almost all justice measures in fully addressing past human rights crimes, the lack of use of any measures acceptable to victims of the violence signals that the Indonesian government does not consider such cases pressing enough. In order to assess how activists might move such cases back onto a national agenda, my analysis focuses on the Argentinian group H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio/Children for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence), whose members led a successful campaign for a resumption of trials. I compare the similar emphasis in their activism on exposing impunity to that in the work of the Indonesian group KKP (Koalisi Keadilan dan Pengungkapan Kebenaran/Coalition for Justice and Truth). I assess their efforts alongside the different political contexts of both countries, arguing that a focus on impunity may be crucial in cracking impasses in justice measures.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 16 February 2017



Accepted 2 August 2017

## KEYWORDS

human rights; Argentina; Coalition for Justice and Truth (KKP); Children for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence (H.I.J.O.S.); memory; truth commission

The ongoing state of impunity in Indonesia has seen the emergence of more cases of human rights abuses, and hence the impasse in dealing with them to become deeply entrenched. Perpetrators remain in positions of power and victims remain marginalized and blamed. Impunity creates the conditions for new violence because there are no sanctions for human rights violators.<sup>1</sup>

In 2008, ten years after the end of the authoritarian Suharto regime, Indonesian human rights activists joined together in the KKP (Koalisi Keadilan dan Pengungkapan

**CONTACT** Katharine McGregor  [k.mcgregor@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:k.mcgregor@unimelb.edu.au)  School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, 3010, Australia

© 2017 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Kebenaran/Coalition for Justice and Truth) to try to address the justice impasse for multiple cases of human rights abuses that occurred in Indonesia between 1965 and 2005. As indicated in the above quote, the KKPK focused on exposing impunity and its lasting impact on survivors and society in terms of the repetition of patterns of violence.

This article examines the impact of a new sustained focus in Indonesian human rights activism on connecting historical experiences of violence to ongoing impunity. Using Argentinian human rights activism as a point of comparison, I argue that this new focus may be crucial to overcoming the justice impasse for the largest-scale repression in Indonesian history, the 1965 violence directed at the Indonesian left. The reason I turn to Argentina for comparison is because of the proclaimed successes of its human rights movement, as accentuated by the leading scholar of human rights, Kathryn Sikkink.<sup>2</sup> The Argentinian government supported not only a truth commission, but also select trials of perpetrators shortly after the period of brutal military rule between 1976 and 1983. Further to this, when all justice measures stalled, Argentinian activists successfully advocated for a resumption of trials. In Indonesia, by contrast, despite sustained activism, a proposed truth commission was debated but then aborted and there have been no trials of perpetrators for the 1965 case or any other significant national measures for justice.<sup>3</sup> Truth commissions and trials both have limitations and they are certainly not the only forms of redress for human rights crimes.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore the use of such mechanisms does not necessarily signal a transition to democracy.<sup>5</sup> At the very least, however, their implementation reflects government-level acknowledgement of the experiences of those victimized and the need for truth seeking and accountability for past crimes.

This raises the question of what forms of activism can create a societal and government consensus on the need to introduce measures of justice that are acceptable to survivors. Pointing again to Argentina, the leading memory studies scholar Andreas Huyssen has argued that “the active prosecution of human rights violations depends on the strength of memory discourses in the public sphere—in journalism, films, media, literature, the arts, education, and even urban graffiti.”<sup>6</sup> Despite making this claim, however, Huyssen does not provide a detailed analysis of what kinds of memory discourses led to legal justice, nor does he analyse the groups that produced these discourses. I argue that using memory to highlight ongoing impunity may be one of the most effective forms of memory activism for the purposes of achieving human rights outcomes such as rehabilitation of victims, compensation and/or trials of perpetrators. I refer here to the use of individual memory—including public testimony from survivors of violence or the use of photographs of the disappeared—as well as popular memory expressed through forms of historical representation of the past, such as films, street art, pamphlets and exhibitions. In order to focus more specifically on these activists, it is useful, following Elizabeth Jelin, to think of them as “memory entrepreneurs” who strategically engage in memory work for a variety of purposes.<sup>7</sup>

The memory entrepreneurs I focus on are activists in the KKPK and activists in the Argentinian group H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio/Children for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence). I focus on H.I.J.O.S. because their activism, similarly to that of the KKPK, focuses on exposing impunity and because, along with other changes in society, it contributed to a resumption of military trials in Argentina.<sup>8</sup> There are as yet few analyses of the KKPK, in contrast to a significant number of studies about H.I.J.O.S.<sup>9</sup> My analysis is based on press reports, non-

governmental organization (NGO) reports, documentaries and scholarly commentaries of both groups.

Throughout this article, I follow the definition of impunity outlined in 2005 by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as

the impossibility, *de jure* or *de facto*, of bringing perpetrators of violations to account—whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings—since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims.<sup>10</sup>

Impunity at its crux means that perpetrators of past human rights violations remain “above the law.”<sup>11</sup> In each national case there are different scales of impunity, ranging from almost complete impunity in the Indonesian case, to partial impunity in the Argentine case due to the slow pace and limited reach of the trials.<sup>12</sup>

I argue that evidence from both cases suggests that sustained memory activism during periods where justice is on hold is essential in paving the way for justice outcomes. Further to this, however, a particular focus on impunity has the ability to make cases of historical injustice more pressing in contemporary society, if connections can be made between the past and the present state of the society in question.

## **The Indonesian and Argentinian Repressions**

In order to compare activism in both countries, I first outline some features of the repressions, noting their similarities but also differences. Repressions against the political left across Latin America have frequently been compared in scholarship, due to the effects of regional policies such as the US Doctrine of National Security and interconnected politics of the region, including, for example, the radicalizing influence of Cuban politics.<sup>13</sup> Yet, as Odd Arne Westad argues, there are broader patterns that extend beyond this region, to the politics and related Cold War repressions in Africa and Asia.<sup>14</sup>

The Western-supported genocide of the Indonesian political left from 1965 to 1968 occurred in the context of a military takeover of the government and was followed by the military's ongoing use of violence to repress dissent until at least the end of the regime in 1998.<sup>15</sup> Across Latin America, attacks on the political left began in 1964 with a military coup in Brazil and continued until 1996 with a peace accord in Guatemala. Thus, in a similar time frame from the 1960s to the 1990s, with the support of Western powers, militaries in the region carried out state terrorism against leftist political groups or persons, characterized by mass disappearances.

One purpose of violence in Indonesia was to remove President Sukarno from power. Following formal independence from the Dutch in 1949, Sukarno focused on a programme of nation building underpinned by a populist ideology. He stressed the need for political independence in the context of the Cold War. From 1959, in the face of ongoing divisions in the government, President Sukarno implemented an authoritarian regime of guided democracy, during which he proposed to implement Indonesian socialism. During this period, the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) and the politicized and largely anti-communist army were the most important political groups. John Roosa has argued that by the early 1960s the army, with support from

anti-communist Western regimes, was looking for any pretext to crush its political competitor, the PKI.<sup>16</sup>

The attack began in October 1965 following the actions of the September 30th Movement, which killed six generals and one lieutenant in an effort to counter a rumoured move against the PKI. The army under the command of Major-General Suharto quickly crushed the Movement and blamed it on the PKI. The army spread propaganda emphasizing communist betrayal and barbarity, as “evidenced” by the alleged mutilation of the aforesaid generals’ corpses.<sup>17</sup> Until recently, there was still speculation about the exact role of the army in coordinating the violence. Jess Melvin has recently, however, uncovered documentary evidence that Major-General Suharto sent instructions out to regional army commanders to encourage them to take swift action against the PKI by drawing on trained civilian volunteers. In the region of Aceh, there is evidence that the army and police closely coordinated the arrests and killings of suspected communists.<sup>18</sup> In other areas of Indonesia, such as East and Central Java, there was more support among the army for President Sukarno and/or the PKI, and thus a reluctance to participate. Here, there was greater reliance on the elite Army Para-Commando Regiment (Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat, RPKAD) or civilian vigilantes. Suharto created the Operations Command for the Restoration of Order (Komando Operasi Pemulihan dan Ketertiban, Kopkamtib) on October 10, 1965 as a way of legitimizing his efforts to “take control of security operations,” which at first entailed tracking down alleged communists.<sup>19</sup> Headed by Suharto as commander (Pangkopkamtib), Kopkamtib co-opted groups in society that were anti-communist, such as the right wing of the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in East Java or the Christian Church in Eastern Indonesia, to participate in arrests and killings.<sup>20</sup>

Between 1965 and 1968 approximately half a million Indonesians were killed.<sup>21</sup> This included members of the PKI and members of the aligned or affiliated women’s movement, labour movement, as well as youth, teacher and artist organizations and other Sukarno supporters. People were generally killed in secret at night in remote locations such as forests, after being kidnapped from their homes or taken in lots from jails and temporary detention centres, thus replicating similar disappearances in Latin America.<sup>22</sup> All government institutions were screened and purged of people deemed to be “communist.” Up to a million people were imprisoned for varying periods of time without trial.<sup>23</sup> Long-term prisoners were sent to penal colonies where they were subjected to forced labour. Prisoners were commonly tortured during interrogations and women targeted with sexual violence.<sup>24</sup> Upon release, former prisoners suffered ongoing discrimination.

The Argentinian repression was preceded by a period of competition between supporters and opponents of Perónism. Between 1946 and 1955, the opportunistic army colonel Juan Perón implemented a populist programme that entailed critiques of oligarchies, new recognition for members of the working class and unions, social welfare, economic independence, neutrality in the Cold War and a strong role for the military.<sup>25</sup> Perón was ousted in a military coup in 1955 and fled the country. Support for Perón, however, remained strong and a series of military governments failed to quell this support. New youth groups comprising mostly students and the working class, inspired by the 1959 Cuban Revolution, continued to demand Perón’s return. A brutal repression of a popular uprising in Córdoba in 1969 further radicalized these groups, leading them to form guerrilla-style organizations. The pressure of these groups and of a Perónist labour movement was

eventually enough for the military to allow Perón to return from exile. He served as president again from 1973, but died of a heart attack in 1974.

By early 1976, the army had largely defeated the guerrillas, but General Jorge Videla and Admiral Emilio Massera staged a military coup d'état on 24 March and proceeded to eliminate Perónism and leftism and associated nationalist anti-imperialist ideology.<sup>26</sup> The new military regime began a full-scale attack on the guerrillas, Perónists and other leftists code named the "Process of National Reorganization."<sup>27</sup> They censored civil society, closed the congress, and purged unions and universities and other sources of potential opposition. Feierstein argues that this was a highly coordinated campaign of state terrorism.<sup>28</sup> It began with the division of Argentina into zones and task groups of military and police who proceeded to abduct people and hold them in secret detention centres where they were tortured then killed. They also used sexual violence against women. The military framed the repression in terms of a "fight against subversion" and characterized the violence as two-sided. Other groups in society were complicit in the repression, such as the Catholic Church and the judiciary.<sup>29</sup>

The people targeted in the repression included members of armed guerrilla organizations (fewer than 1,000 people), student and labour activists, lawyers, journalists, teachers and others who had participated in left-wing and right-wing Perónist and non-Perónist social movements. People were singled out based on "their ideological choices, their places within the economic structure and/or their community and labour relations."<sup>30</sup> The confirmed number of people killed is 12,000, but human rights organizations estimate that between 15,000 and 30,000 people were killed.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these disappeared adults, children born to detained pregnant women were taken at birth and often brought up by military families with no knowledge of the identities of their birth parents.<sup>32</sup>

The Argentinian and Indonesian militaries targeted politically active persons sympathetic generally to revolutionary change in society and to the populist politics of the charismatic leaders Perón and Sukarno respectively. Levy describes "the total repression" of the people and practices in Argentina "that subverted the capitalist order in Latin America."<sup>33</sup> This matches the targets of the Indonesian repression, who likewise subverted the capitalist order in Indonesia.<sup>34</sup> Both campaigns were characterized by mass disappearances, leading to ongoing demands for redress and, at the very least, truth as to what happened to the disappeared.

## Justice Measures in Argentina and Indonesia

A central difference between Indonesia and Argentina was that in Argentina some forms of protest were possible during the military regime. From April 1977, for example, a group of mothers of disappeared children bravely began to gather in a silent vigil in the central square of Buenos Aires, Plaza de Mayo, every Thursday. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo kept up a visible street presence, carrying placards with photographs and the names of their children, demanding information and sometimes facing reprisals.<sup>35</sup> In their activism they emphasized their disappeared children, and in some cases grandchildren, and thus the victims of the repression.<sup>36</sup> Diana Taylor has pointed to the performative aspect of their activism whereby the women, dressed in white headscarves marching in a public space carrying photographs of their children, sought to socialize their traumatic memories.<sup>37</sup> Alongside activism, another significant reason for the regime's downfall was the

Argentine military's failed war against Britain over the Falkland Islands in 1982.<sup>38</sup> Despite their weakened position, military leaders rushed to publish a document justifying their actions in patriotic terms of saving the country from terrorists and subversives, and granting themselves amnesty.<sup>39</sup>

Argentines elected Raúl Alfonsín as president in 1983 on the basis of his insistence on accountability for human rights crimes and his professed tough stance against the military. He responded to popular demands for justice by submitting legislation to rescind the amnesty decree and creating a National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) overseen by distinguished citizens. Commissioners collected testimonies from victims of detention and families of the disappeared. The commission was attended by many people and reported on in the press, thereby socializing new understandings about the repression very early in the transition period. The report released in 1984 entitled "Never Again" (*Nunca Más*) detailed the basis of the doctrine behind the repression, the groups of people who had been victimized, the forms of abduction and torture, the coordinated nature of the repression and locations of secret detention centres.<sup>40</sup> This was the first truth commission in the world. The report, however, had some limitations. Firstly, it was based on a limited 180-day investigation to satisfy the military. Secondly, it gave a preliminary estimate that 8,960 people had been disappeared.<sup>41</sup> Survivors and human rights organizations, however, argued that the number was far greater.

The new government also endorsed trials of military leaders but faced resistance in this process. From the outset, the scope and targets of the trials were limited.<sup>42</sup> The military continued to pressure and intimidate activists and politicians.<sup>43</sup> It was on this basis that President Alfonsín limited prosecutions to those most responsible for the repression. Trials of nine generals who had served during the repression resulted in five convictions in 1985, including General Videla and Admiral Massera. Far-right factions of the military made up of former commandos, intelligence and special operations officers, known as the *carapintadas*, mutinied in revolt. Although loyal troops halted the mutinies, the Alfonsín government bowed to military pressure and passed new laws that curtailed future prosecutions.<sup>44</sup> These were the Full Stop Law of 1986 that put an end date to the period within which all trials were to occur, and the Due Obedience Law of 1987, which restricted any prosecutions to officers only and not their subordinates.

The Argentine military continued to assert influence over the civilian government on the basis of new alleged threats to national security.<sup>45</sup> In this climate, in 1990 the newly elected president, Carlos Menem, pardoned the military leaders sentenced in 1985 on the basis of "reconciliation." Human rights organizations and victims responded with bewilderment, arguing that reconciliation cannot be one-sided and that the state had no right to forgive crimes committed by the state.<sup>46</sup>

The ten-year anniversary of the first trials and of the *Nunca Más* report and the twenty-year anniversary of the coup led to renewed attention on the repression, including unprecedented military confessions and reinvigorated activism. In 1995, former naval officer Lieutenant Commander Adolfo Scilingo, who served in the notorious Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA) prison, admitted to a lawyer from CELS (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales/Centre for Legal and Social Studies) the widespread practice of throwing drugged and naked prisoners from aeroplanes into the ocean to their deaths.<sup>47</sup> The confession led to demands from CELS and families of the disappeared for a new practice of



"truth trials," whereby victims could demand via trial information from perpetrators on the fates of the disappeared.<sup>48</sup> The most high-profile military confession came from Army General Chief of Staff Martín Balza, who publicly admitted that the armed forces had tortured and killed the disappeared and stolen property from them during the repression.<sup>49</sup> These confessions were accompanied by a wave of denials from military men and a reassertion of their role in fighting "a just and necessary war."<sup>50</sup> Yet they represented a significant break from a uniform military position and combined with the anniversary they worked to reinvigorate activist demands for truth and justice. It was in this context that H.I.J.O.S. began adding to the momentum of activist groups such as the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and CELS.<sup>51</sup>

In Indonesia, efforts to deal with the human rights abuses from the 1965 case came much later after the violence, due to the thirty-two-year rule of President Suharto. His entire regime, labelled the "New Order," was based on the premise of the military together with the people saving the nation from the "communists." The narrative that the violence was justified was repeatedly propagated by the regime through the media, history textbooks, monuments and a state-sponsored propaganda film.<sup>52</sup> The army, however, concealed its precise role in the violence, and similarly to the Argentinian military, tried to promote acceptance of the belief that the violence took place in the context of a two-sided "civil war."<sup>53</sup> Unlike the case of Argentina, however, most Indonesians and especially those most directly affected by the violence were too afraid to protest openly against the violence as it unfolded, for fear of being branded as communists and subsequently jailed or worse. Furthermore, there were sections of society such as the religious organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) that were co-opted into participating in the violence that had a joint interest with the army in defending the necessity of the killings.<sup>54</sup>

The Suharto regime ended in 1998 following mounting demands for reform and violent riots in major cities. The end of this long-lasting regime produced great expectations of political change. Survivors of the violence focused first on the disappeared by documenting mass graves around Indonesia to accumulate irrefutable evidence of the massacres.<sup>55</sup> Under civilian presidents Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid, the military formally retreated from politics and new laws for dealing with human rights abuses were introduced.

In 2000, the Indonesian government passed Law No. 26, which allowed for the formation of Ad Hoc Human Rights Courts to deal retroactively with gross violations of human rights. The law enabled the National Commission of Human Rights (Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia, Komnasham), established in 1993, to conduct investigations into such crimes after which the Attorney-General could rule on whether a special court and prosecutions would commence.<sup>56</sup> As Ken Setiawan has argued, there have been ongoing problems, however, with the quality of investigations conducted by the Komnasham in terms of clearly identifying perpetrators, due to the pressure of military influence.<sup>57</sup> The Attorney-General has also rejected many investigations based seemingly on political reasons. Further to this, only two cases advanced to Ad Hoc Human Rights Courts: the violence following the independence ballot in East Timor (1999) and the shooting of Muslim protestors in Tanjung Priok (1984). In each case, only low-ranking officers were sentenced and all their sentences were eventually overturned. In the East Timor case, twelve defendants were acquitted and six other junior military men were convicted, with their verdicts overturned at appeal. The commander of the Indonesian army at this time, General Wiranto, who was indicted by the UN in 2003 for war crimes for the same



case, was not subjected to a trial.<sup>58</sup> Despite the army's supposed retreat from politics, there is still strong resistance to any public identification let alone punishment of senior army figures in relation to human rights cases.

Human rights activists were able to lobby successfully at first for the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). By 2001 they had prepared a draft bill, and Law No. 27 of 2004 was passed to help set up a TRC. Suparman Marzuki has perceptively observed, however, that members of the armed forces raised objections to the emphasis in the legislation on truth telling, and argued instead for an emphasis on reconciliation, based strictly on the principles of Indonesia as a unified nation, in which communism remains banned.<sup>59</sup> Human rights advocates, meanwhile, objected to the proposed amnesty for perpetrators in the legislation. When the legislation was referred to the Constitutional Court for review, the court abrogated the entire law in 2006, rather than revising specific sections of it.<sup>60</sup> In contrast to Argentina, then, in this critical early transition period efforts to both criminally try Indonesian military officials and to create a truth commission failed. What this seemed to reflect was an unofficial "pact of impunity," an understanding between government officials and the military that the Indonesian military, especially former generals, would remain above the law and not be brought to account for past violations.<sup>61</sup>

In January 2008, former president Suharto died without having to account for his central role in the 1965 killings. Due to the fact that there were some reform elements in the government, such as former human rights and student activists, there was still some government support for investigations into the 1965 case. This explains why later that same year Komnasham was able to begin investigating the 1965 case. Commissioners faced ongoing threats and received little cooperation from the military during the investigations. In 2012, Komnasham announced its findings of gross human rights violations including killings, exterminations, slavery, forced removal from an area, restrictions on physical freedom, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and forced disappearances.<sup>62</sup> The commission attributed responsibility for the violence to Suharto as the former Pangkopkamtib and to regional and local military commanders.<sup>63</sup> Commissioners recommended either further investigations by the Attorney-General or a non-judicial resolution. This could have led to the formation of an Ad Hoc Human Rights Court or a non-judicial settlement if agreed to by survivors.<sup>64</sup> Yet successive Attorneys-General have repeatedly declared the evidence in the report to be inadequate and refused to proceed with any further investigations.

The same year that Komnasham began work on its report, Indonesian human rights activists formed the KPPK on the basis of a shared consensus across member organizations that all justice measures had stalled, and perhaps also due to limited expectations as to how far the commission's investigations would progress given previous experience.

I will now compare the approaches and outcomes of the activism of H.I.J.O.S. and KPPK, asking what difference a focus on impunity has made. I will examine how activists in the two organizations have conceptualized their work and what the responses to their activism have been.

## **H.I.J.O.S. and the Strategy of Outing Perpetrators to Expose Ongoing Impunity in Argentina**

Building on the practice of direct activism by the mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared, the children of the disappeared, political activists and exiles formed H.I.J.O.S. in

Córdoba in 1995. The acronym *hijos* spells out the word children in Spanish, reflecting a change in the generations engaging in activism. In their first open letter they proclaimed:

This society is the offspring of silence and terror, and there is an attempt to spread a veil of oblivion over the history of our country. We are not bricks in the wall of silence. We want to pull it down. We need to know the truth of our histories to reconstruct our identity ... Recovering memory and knowing the truth is essential for society as a whole.<sup>65</sup>

The membership of H.I.J.O.S. includes disappeared children taken from detained mothers at birth. Many of these persons only discovered their pasts decades later, due largely to the activism of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who have sought to reunite with their lost grandchildren.<sup>66</sup> Given that they have grown up with no knowledge of their birth family's history, these activists are driven by a direct realization of the personal effects of truth denial. H.I.J.O.S. member Victoria Donda Perez, for example, who had only recently discovered her identity as a child of the disappeared, spoke in 2005 to a crowd of demonstrators asking where her brothers and sisters were.<sup>67</sup> Activists such as Perez, and indeed the mothers and grandmothers, use their personal memories and experiences to advocate for the importance of truth about the past.

In the context of the perceived closure of debate on the disappearances, members of H.I.J.O.S. refused to endorse a code of silence or forgetting. They advocated for the need for persistent reminders of the violence, not just for themselves, but for Argentinian society more broadly. The emergence of H.I.J.O.S. was also related to the perceived entrenchment of impunity, as evidenced, for example, by the frequent appearance of former known torturers in the media and public life, even as politicians.<sup>68</sup>

When they commenced their activism, members of H.I.J.O.S. thought creatively about how they could keep the memory of the violence alive in the minds of Argentinians.<sup>69</sup> Because their primary concern was that the legal prosecution of perpetrators had not been taken far enough, they made a decision to focus on exposing persons they refer to as *represores* or repressors, who continued to live in society with no sanctions. Activists began their work by investigating individuals whom survivors had identified as repressors. They went into the neighbourhoods where alleged perpetrators lived to find out more about the accused, and to discuss their pasts with locals. Based on initial collaborations with street art groups, they developed a spectacle-based approach. They placed markers around the accused's neighbourhood and then held a performance on the streets of what is called an *escrache*, meaning an uncovering that stripped perpetrators of their anonymity. The *escrache* performers sing and dance in a style typical of working-class neighbourhoods and read out speeches about the crimes of the accused.

Like the Mothers, they used photographs as a way of reminding spectators of the disappeared and also as a way of publicly identifying the repressors.<sup>70</sup> Continuing on from earlier patterns of military intimidation of activists, outsiders sometimes infiltrated the *escrache* and encouraged violence in the protests to give H.I.J.O.S. a bad name. This led to new tactics of vigilance within the group to prevent this occurring.<sup>71</sup>

In the lead-up to an *escrache*, activists socialize its purpose and inform the local community about the history of the repressor living nearby. In 2002, for example, H.I.J.O.S. staged a large *escrache* outside the apartment building of Juan Luis Donocick, who served as a police commissioner and as a guard at a detention centre during the dictatorship.<sup>72</sup> In the months before the *escrache*, H.I.J.O.S. members distributed information via

pamphlets about Donocick and what he had done during the dictatorship, and alerted locals to the *escrache*. An organizer explained that the *escrache* “is a way to denounce the impunity of the genocide perpetrators.” Another H.I.J.O.S. activist and the daughter of disappeared parents reasoned that, in “the absence of a legal sentence,” the *escrache* is a form of “social sentence.” By this she meant that H.I.J.O.S. intended to socially punish perpetrators potentially by means of endorsed social exclusion whereby the group made “his own house a jail.” It is this aspect of the *escrache* that has led some to describe them as mob-based justice.<sup>73</sup> Yet H.I.J.O.S. activists stress that their objective is not violence, but instead to call to account those who inflicted mass violence.<sup>74</sup> There seemed to be mixed reactions to this *escrache* in the neighbourhood, with some people taking pamphlets, stopping to listen and expressing surprise about this repressor living so close. Others, while supportive of its intention, were not convinced of what the *escrache* would achieve. Some locals took pamphlets but did not stop to hear explanations; others seemed to avoid the activists, perhaps also out of fear.<sup>75</sup>

By the day of the *escrache*, the neighbourhood was decorated with signs denouncing the repressors, posters featuring the photograph and address of Donocick, and a mural in the local park depicting the detention centre where he had worked.<sup>76</sup> Neighbours were alerted to the *escrache* by the loud banging of drums and the use of megaphones in the street procession. They opened windows, sat out on balconies to listen or joined in the procession. A speaker praised the grandmothers for their inspiration, directly connecting this struggle for justice with that of H.I.J.O.S. Members of the crowd, which seemed to include a mix of H.I.J.O.S. members and locals, chanted, “Alert, alert to the neighbours there’s an assassin living next to you,” as they moved closer to Donocick’s house.<sup>77</sup> A number of activists then delivered speeches calling for remembrance of the disappeared and condemnation of those responsible. As riot police guarded the property behind temporary fences armed with batons and plastic shields, the protestors wrote Donocick’s name on the footpath in yellow paint, naming him as a repressor, and then dispersed. One activist commented that the real effects of the action would only be felt after it had taken place, through the societal response to this person.<sup>78</sup> The assumption that seemed to underpin this statement was that society would participate in the social sanctioning of this man. Given that he had no opportunity to defend himself, and the possible ramifications also for his family, this seems excessive. A more general aim, however, was to raise awareness and therefore create a greater demand for justice by making this free repressor a symbol of ongoing impunity for past crimes in Argentina.

The *escrache* performances are a method of social repudiation designed to expose how perpetrators continue to live with impunity in society. Taylor views the *escrache* as part of the same lineage of protest-based politics of the Mothers and suggests that they too “make visible the lasting trauma suffered by families of the disappeared and the country as a whole.”<sup>79</sup> Despite some critiques of their confrontational approach, Seidel believes that H.I.J.O.S. activists were able to reinscribe the “Argentine genocide ... into the national historical narrative.”<sup>80</sup> In particular, H.I.J.O.S. sought to challenge claims regarding the repression as a war of two sides (the two demons theory), instead arguing that this was state terrorism. Druliolle has suggested that through the *escrache*, activists transformed “memory into a call to mobilize to defend all human rights in the present.”<sup>81</sup> A daughter of disappeared parents stated in 2002: “we see militancy as a

way to exorcise the pain, to change pain into an overwhelming power.”<sup>82</sup> Her hope was to create a broader movement for change.

After eight years of *escrache* and the continuation of other forms of activism, Argentines elected President Néstor Kirchner in 2003. This reflected a strong desire on the part of the people for further justice, since Kirchner, who was persecuted by the military during the repression, was committed to this aim. He retired members of the military who had served during the repression and successfully pushed the national congress to overturn the 1986 and 1987 amnesty laws.<sup>83</sup> Some of the steps taken by Kirchner were the result of activist efforts. The annulment of the amnesty laws, for example, was a product of the ongoing work of lawyers in CELS.<sup>84</sup> In response to the efforts of activist groups to denounce the description of the violence as two-sided, Kirchner reissued the *Nunca Más* report with a new prologue in which the violence was now described as state terrorism.<sup>85</sup> Building on activists’ efforts to memorialize sites of violence, Kirchner authorized a National Memory Archive to preserve survivor testimonies and memorialized the most notorious torture centre, ESMA.<sup>86</sup>

It is of course not possible to attribute all of Kirchner’s actions to the work of H.I.J.O.S. Other activist groups adopting different approaches, including efforts to memorialize this past, continued to keep the memory of the dictatorship alive in periods of amnesty. Outside of the realm of memory work, other aspects of Argentinian political culture enabled more successful activism. Kathryn Sikkink has, for example, highlighted the broad base of social activism in Argentina; the resources of most activists given that many came from urban middle-class backgrounds; strong traditions of legal advocacy and “judicialization”; and a strong history and acceptance of adversarial politics such that there was less willingness to compromise.<sup>87</sup> Two other crucial processes that enabled Argentina to overcome a culture of impunity were a commitment to legal reform and increasing civilian control of the military.<sup>88</sup>

The unique contribution of H.I.J.O.S., however, was to focus on the fact that while family members of the disappeared continued to suffer, those responsible for the disappearances continued to lead their lives completely exempted from prosecution. By going into neighbourhoods and socializing the histories of former “repressors,” and through the media attention these spectacles drew, their activism brought the reality of impunity to the attention of everyday Argentinians. In doing so, they tried to build a consensus on the need for further legal justice. In 2005, Kirchner decided to resume trials of all persons responsible for violence. H.I.J.O.S. members decided to continue to support victims during the trials as a way of further publicizing the latter’s ongoing trauma so that the trials would have a broader impact on the public.<sup>89</sup>

As Kathryn Sikkink has argued, Argentinian innovations in redress for human rights crimes contributed significantly to an international “justice cascade,” a global shift towards greater accountability for human rights crimes.<sup>90</sup> From the 1990s in particular, there was growing attention from the UN, for example, to impunity and its effects in international human rights norms.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, around the same time that the trials were being resumed in Argentina, the UN Commission on Human Rights updated the principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity.<sup>92</sup> The principles reflect the demands of Argentinian and other Latin American activists especially concerning the legal rights of victims to truth and justice; the state’s duty to open archives and preserve memory; and the necessity of reforming state institutions

implicated in human rights abuses. Reflecting the increasingly global flow of human rights-related ideals across transnational activist communities, many of these principles were taken up in Indonesian activism.

### **KKPK and the Strategy of Emphasizing the Impact of Impunity in Indonesia**

Since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, Indonesian survivors of the 1965 violence and human rights activists have campaigned for historical justice for this case. After years of small-scale initiatives by NGOs at the grassroots and national levels to address the 1965 case, Indonesian activists from forty-seven member organizations including survivor groups formed a large coalition called the KKPK in 2008. The KKPK includes organizations that represent multiple cases of human rights abuses, including other major cases of military violence in the disputed Indonesian provinces of Aceh, West Papua and Timor Leste (formerly East Timor, which Indonesia occupied between 1975 and 1999).<sup>93</sup> Compared to Argentina, the children of those killed or imprisoned are not as strongly represented among activists in the KKPK for the 1965 case, due most likely to ongoing stigmas and discrimination against those labelled “communist.” According to Wahyuningroem, who is both a KKPK activist and a scholar, one of the most important functions of the KKPK is to act as a bridge between local and national justice initiatives and to eventually also combine a focus on truth seeking with “other forms of justice both retributive and restorative.”<sup>94</sup> Given the low public trust in legal institutions, the initial aim of the KKPK was to push for the formation of an Indonesian Truth Commission. Drawing on their networks with former activists now working in the government, they worked together with them to draft revised legislation for a TRC.<sup>95</sup>

After successful lobbying, in late 2010 the Minister for Law and Human Rights presented a new draft TRC law—which excluded amnesty provisions—to the incumbent Indonesian president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Himself a retired army general and the son-in-law of former RPKAD commander Sarwo Edhie who led a campaign to “crush the communists” in Central Java, the president did not pass the draft law to the parliament for deliberation.<sup>96</sup> Instead, he commissioned Djoko Suyanto, the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security, and members of the president’s advisory council to find a new format for dealing with human rights. In 2012, the same year that the Komnasham report was completed, there were rumours of a presidential apology for all past human rights crimes, but following pressure from the military and other organizations implicated in the 1965 case, this did not eventuate.<sup>97</sup>

At the same time that they pursued legal avenues for justice, KKPK member organizations continued to work on different forms of memory initiatives, focusing mostly on truth telling relating to 1965. Members of JPIT in Eastern Indonesia, for example, focused on oral history work among women survivors, resulting in the first book to examine the women’s experiences and the role of the Christian Church in this region in the violence.<sup>98</sup> The fact that the researchers came from the church seemed to have enabled this research to proceed. This cautious approach of working closely with communities involved characterized many of the efforts of member organizations in the KKPK. In contrast to the work of H.I.J.O.S., efforts to remember the violence in Indonesia have focused largely on survivors rather than perpetrators, perhaps also because of an awareness of the ongoing influence of perpetrator groups in society.

Two exceptions to this, however, are the 2012 film *The Act of Killing* and a related special edition of the magazine *Tempo*, both of which focused on exposing perpetrators, who are generally referred to in Indonesian as *jagal*, or executioners. *The Act of Killing*, directed by American nationals Joshua Oppenheimer and Christine Cynn and an anonymous Indonesian director, centres on re-enactments of the killings by a largely proud executioner, Anwar Congo, and his former colleagues from the Pemuda Pancasila (Pancasila Youth), in the Northern Sumatran city of Medan. The film prompted a special edition of *Tempo* on former executioners from both Pancasila Youth and Nahdlatul Ulama.<sup>99</sup> In these two initiatives, former executioners effectively outed themselves by agreeing to be interviewed. In this way, they served a similar function to the *escrache* in Argentina of exposing impunity. Yet the response from senior officials of the civilian organizations whose members gave testimonies in the film and magazine was one of anger and threats against the filmmakers and journalists for the alleged misrepresentations of their organizations.<sup>100</sup>

Aware of ongoing sensitivities in society, members of the KKPK also turned their attention to exposing impunity, but through a different approach. In the context of the failure of the Indonesian justice system so far on other human rights cases, they did not demand immediate trials of former military or civilian leaders. Instead, in 2013 they decided to initiate an independent “Year of Truth Telling” to mirror some of the functions of an official truth commission. The hearings held in Jakarta, Kupang, Aceh, Papua, Palu and Solo focused on truth telling about several human rights abuse cases and included coverage of the killings, imprisonment, forced labour and sexual violence in the 1965 case. In each public forum, survivors were given the floor to testify at length as to their experiences of abuse as a way of “displacing and negating the state’s official narrative,” in which they remain invisible.<sup>101</sup> In this process, the KKPK sought to expose how patterns of violence prevalent in the 1965 case had been repeated over and over again by the security forces.<sup>102</sup>

The “Year of Truth Telling” was designed to provide public acknowledgement of victims and to look for a solution to their ongoing suffering. The hearings aimed to make clear the impact on victims of unresolved cases and to strengthen a commitment to human rights.<sup>103</sup> To give the hearings further legitimacy, and mirroring the basis of the Argentine Truth Commission, activists elected a Citizens’ Council consisting of respected Indonesians representing religious and educational institutions, as well as select government officials and human rights activists, to listen to the testimonies.<sup>104</sup> They kept most forums open to the public, live-streamed them and uploaded short video testimonies and case studies to YouTube.<sup>105</sup>

The emphasis on truth telling was also based on a process of learning from other countries. The KKPK cited inspiration from activists in Brazil, Iraq, Guatemala and other countries that had taken the initiative to “oppose forgetting and demand truth and justice.”<sup>106</sup> They also referenced the recognition in the UN principles mentioned above, of the right to truth “without necessarily waiting for decisions from judicial mechanisms.”<sup>107</sup> The slogan of opposing forgetting (*melawan lupa*) became increasingly prominent in activism during this period. KKPK members continued to work on multiple memory-related projects, including a competition entitled “re-innovation of memory” targeted at young people who were asked to use their creativity to give new meanings to past cases of human rights abuse in Indonesia.<sup>108</sup>

The timing of the “Year of Truth Telling” was significant. President Yudhoyono was ending his second term of office and the two candidates contesting the 2014 presidential election were the relatively young governor of Jakarta and former mayor of Solo, Djoko Widodo, who was from a civilian background, and the retired Special Forces General Prabowo Subianto, who was involved in the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in 1997–98. Activists were highly aware that the 2014 election could see the appointment of a candidate who was even more likely to ignore cases of past human rights violations. Although some activists still supported Prabowo, others believed that reminding society of the many cases of unresolved human rights abuses was especially urgent.

Like H.I.J.O.S., KKKPK activists positioned their work as part of an effort to remake society. The report that they authored after the conclusion of the hearings, for example, was entitled “Finding Indonesia Again” and was premised on the view that

... sixteen years into the reform era the Indonesian nation has not been able to free itself from the shackles of violence that have impeded us since the authoritarian New Order regime. The walls of disavowal have continued to stand firm, perpetuating the misuse of power and violence in the name of the nation of Indonesia.<sup>109</sup>

Wary of ongoing critiques of activism for the survivors of the 1965 violence, and possibly also of increasing global critiques of the automatic adoption of so-called “international justice measures,”<sup>110</sup> they carefully framed their work as part of an effort to restore the values that underpinned the foundation of the Indonesian nation. In particular, they referenced the need for a nationwide commitment to upholding the guarantees in the Indonesian constitution and laws for the protection of human rights.<sup>111</sup>

The 2014 KKKPK report provided comprehensive recommendations on how to resolve past human rights cases. Among other measures, they called for effective resolution of human rights cases that had already been investigated by Komnasham, including conclusive legal judgements; for reform and improved capacity of legal institutions in dealing with human rights; for an effective mechanism for truth telling as the basis of reconciliation; memorialization to promote greater awareness of past human rights abuses; reparations, rehabilitation and protection of survivors; and reform in the security sector with regard to human rights training and sanctions for violations such that victims could be assured of non-repetition.<sup>112</sup> The KKKPK widely disseminated the report in order to fulfil the aim of socializing the many cases of unsolved human rights abuses and human rights values.

Consistent with their commitment to working with government organizations, they also presented a copy to the Speaker of the People’s Consultative Assembly, the elder statesman Sidarto Danusubroto. On receiving the report, Danusubroto promised to urge the government to take concrete steps to resolve human rights abuses.<sup>113</sup> By the end of 2014, with Djoko Widodo installed as president and his pre-election promise to address past human rights abuses, activists were hopeful of a breakthrough.

There were no immediate indications of a response to the KKKPK’s report. Following prompting by President Widodo in May 2015, the Attorney-General recommended an alternative reconciliation initiative to be decided by a committee of fifteen people, including representatives from the military and police, two organizations complicit in the 1965 violence.<sup>114</sup> Neither the approach nor the composition of the committee was well received by activists.



The fiftieth anniversary of the 1965 killings was marked by a tense atmosphere, possibly due to expectations, as in the case of Argentina, of heightened emotions and demands for justice. There were multiple efforts to commemorate the anniversary, but government representatives repeatedly stopped events that might attract too much attention. Local police, for example, threatened to cancel the permit for the popular international Ubud Writers' and Readers' Festival scheduled for late October 2015 if the organizers did not cancel three sessions—a book launches and a photo exhibition related to the 1965 violence, as well as the screening of the companion film to *The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence*.<sup>115</sup>

Seizing on the anniversary and based on the expectation of no further government efforts to resolve the 1965 case, some but not all KKPK activists under the leadership of Indonesian human rights lawyer Nursyahbani Katjasungkana decided to hold an International People's Tribunal (IPT) in The Hague. Although overseen by a panel of international human rights experts, including judges, the IPT had no formal legal weight. Similar to the "Year of Truth Telling," it aimed to put on record multiple human rights abuses in the 1965 case.<sup>116</sup> The IPT also aimed, however, to attribute responsibility for the violence more directly to the Indonesian state and to use an international setting to demand justice for the victims.

The November tribunal received broad coverage from the Indonesian and international media. This included strong critiques by Indonesian officials on the basis that the issue should not be internationalized in the sense of potentially bringing the case to international courts or using external pressure to lobby the Indonesian government.<sup>117</sup> Although some activists including other KKPK members did not support the tribunal and were fearful about its effects on activism in Indonesia, it seems that perhaps precisely because of the international attention it generated, the Indonesian government was pressured to speed up its response to past human rights abuses. As in the case of the *escrache* in Argentina, this more demonstrative mode of activism that exposed impunity highlighted a real conflict between the government and human rights activists and survivors over the need to both acknowledge and settle past human rights abuses.

In April 2016, for the first time in Indonesian history, representatives of the government including senior military figures endorsed a public discussion of the events of 1965 and proposed methods to resolve this past. It was here that the work of the KKPK seemed to impact the thinking of some of the more progressive retired representatives of the armed forces. One of the key organizers of the symposium, for example, was Sidarto Danusubroto, who was by then serving on the president's advisory council. Another key organizer was retired Lieutenant General Agus Widjojo who had served as a member of the Citizen's Council during the "Year of Truth Telling." Widjojo, the son of one of the generals who was kidnapped and killed by members of the September 30th Movement, has been involved in previous efforts through the Solidarity Forum for Children of the Nation (Solidaritas Anak Bangsa) to reconcile the children of Indonesian political conflicts. Further to this, he was known as a military reformer.

KKPK members also participated in and provided critical commentary throughout the symposium. The KKPK coordinator, Kamala Chandrakirana, alerted the audience to the fact that for twenty years there had already been "consistent and strong work carried out together by civil society and communities of victims."<sup>118</sup> She critiqued the emphasis in the symposium on reconciliation as the starting point for solving cases of past human rights abuses and instead presented the KKPK's proposed strategy for resolving

past human rights crimes. This was composed of six crucial pillars based on rights already guaranteed in the Indonesian constitution: (1) the integrity of Indonesia as a state based on law; (2) truth and acknowledgement; (3) economic and social rehabilitation of victims; (4) education and dialogue leading to reconciliation; (5) institutional renewal and policy change; and (6) victim participation in all efforts to resolve past cases.<sup>119</sup> Other representatives from KKKP member groups, such as Elsam, Syarikat and SKP HAM Palu, also participated in the symposium.

Although the KKKP went much further in the strategies suggested to resolve past human rights cases than Widjojo, at the very least there seemed to be a narrowing of differences between the views of some government officials and those of KKKP activists on how to solve past human rights cases. Widjojo, for example, advocated for the need to build a new society in Indonesia; for joint civil society and government initiatives; for institutional reform; for truth telling; and for reparation and compensation of victims.<sup>120</sup> Given his military background, these were significant concessions. Yet an important and potentially intractable difference was his view that all parties should proceed from the basis of reconciliation as a first, rather than final, step in this process. Consistent with previous military behaviour, he also rejected the need for legal accountability. Alongside his more accommodating views, the former RPKAD troop commander and retired General Sintong Panjaitan, who served in 1965, meanwhile rejected accusations of military crimes and cast doubt on all accepted estimates of the death toll.<sup>121</sup> Yet in closing the symposium, the former police chief Sidarto Danusubroto recommended full rehabilitation of victims of human rights abuses and a restoration of their rights. He also crucially acknowledged Indonesian state complicity in the violence.<sup>122</sup>

Minister Panjaitan appointed a team of persons involved in the symposium to formulate recommendations on how to resolve the 1965 case. The team completed their report within two months and delivered it to the minister for consideration.<sup>123</sup> By that time, however, retired military generals had held an alternative symposium to challenge the first symposium on the basis that, in their view, it presented too many versions of history.<sup>124</sup> The recommendations from the first symposium have not as yet been announced. Meanwhile, Panjaitan was replaced as the Minister for Law and Human Rights by retired General Wiranto, who, as explained above, was previously indicted by the UN for crimes against humanity in East Timor. Despite this development, which outraged activists and victims of past abuses, we can conclude that the sustained focus on remembering 1965 and the particular focus of members of the KKKP on impunity has continued to force a very reluctant government to at least discuss and continue to negotiate a means of addressing this past. Upon taking up his new position as minister, Wiranto felt it necessary to address past human rights cases. When, however, in January 2017 he proposed a new Harmony Council to address past abuses by means only of discussion and deliberation, activists from the KKKP member organization KontraS reported him to the ombudsman for ignoring constitutional obligations, including the requirement to consult with victimized persons in formulating a resolution.<sup>125</sup>

## Conclusions

My comparison of activism relating to the political repressions of the mid 1960s and mid 1970s in Indonesia and Argentina highlights several differences and similarities in the two

cases. One similarity is the persistent influence of the military in both countries in curtailing justice measures and outcomes. Another similarity is steadfast activism directed at reminding society of the experiences of victims of human rights abuses and the effects of ongoing impunity. A key difference is that in Argentina, due to sustained activism throughout the dictatorship, there were early justice measures following military rule. Despite some limitations, the truth commission and trials of key military leaders after the military dictatorship served as an early sanction against military impunity and as an opportunity for public condemnation of the military's past crimes. Yet military intervention resulted in the cessation of trials in the mid 1980s and amnesties being granted to those convicted. In Indonesia, by contrast, following the fall of President Suharto, all efforts for national-level redress for the case of the 1965 violence, including a proposed truth commission, failed due largely to civilian deference to the military and an unofficial "pact of impunity."

In the context of justice impasses in both countries, activists have focused increasingly on exposing impunity and using innovative new methods to achieve their aims. In Argentina, activists were advantaged by several factors specific to their local context, including a strong tradition of legal advocacy, a strong basis for social movements, a history of oppositional protest and the rise of a president committed to military and legal reform. Yet activism focusing on memory and ongoing impunity was crucial. Through their spectacle-based *escrache* in which they outed perpetrators of past human rights crimes, members of H.I.J.O.S. demanded that Argentinians remember the repression and emphasized the importance of ongoing justice measures for the health of Argentinian democracy. In 2005, trials resumed.

In the context of multiple failed efforts to address past injustices through legal measures and official channels, Indonesian activists in the KKPK have also focused on exposing the impunity of the Indonesian military by holding independent public hearings as a way of socializing knowledge about the military's past human rights crimes. In doing so, they shifted, like H.I.J.O.S., to combining a focus on memories of victimization with a more central focus on the ongoing implications for citizens of impunity. The position of the military has been, until very recently, to dismiss any claims of human rights abuses in the 1965 case and to defend the violence, but in early 2016 there were signs of small cracks appearing in that consensus.

In contrast to Argentina, there is not yet an appropriate legal framework in Indonesia to deal with the 1965 case, and it is for this reason that the KKPK's activism focuses on advocacy for the use of multiple methods to deliver truth and justice for survivors. The KKPK's activism is underpinned by a realization that it will be a long road ahead to achieving justice outcomes acceptable to victims. For this reason, they advocate for legal reform and accountability as part of a broader project of remaking Indonesian society, such that in future human rights receive greater protection. In this way, their mission mirrors that of H.I.J.O.S. to make a broader contribution to society, beyond the resolution of past human rights abuses.

My comparisons of Argentinian and Indonesian activism suggest that efforts to oppose forgetting are necessary to sustain pressure on governments to address past human rights abuses. By engaging in ongoing memory work, activists in both countries have attempted to acknowledge victims and to educate the broader public about unsolved cases of human rights through investigations and different forms of truth telling. The focus of H.I.J.O.S. and the KKPK on impunity and its consequences may, however, be a more precise mechanism

for pressuring governments. This is because the emphasis on impunity highlights broader failures in political reform, including military and legal reform.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Funding

This article has been completed with the support of the Australian Research Council Future Fellowship [grant no. FT130100957] for the project *Confronting Historical Injustice in Indonesia: Memory and Transnational Human Rights Activism*.

## Notes on Contributor

**Katharine McGregor** is Associate Professor in Southeast Asian History at the University of Melbourne. She currently holds an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship.

## ORCID

Katharine McGregor  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6955-128X>

## Notes

1. Koalisi Keadilan dan Pengungkapan Kebenaran (KKPK), *Menemukan Indonesia Kembali: memahami empat puluh tahun kekerasan demi memutus rantai impunitas* (n.p.: KKPK, 2014), 34.
2. For an excellent overview of these successes and innovations and their global effects, see Kathryn Sikkink, "From Pariah to Global Protagonist: Argentina and the Struggle for International Human Rights," *Latin American Politics and Society* 50, no. 1 (2008): 1–29.
3. There have been some significant local justice initiatives, but these are underpinned by a focus on local forces, which obscures the past role of the state, and the new narratives that they have endorsed regarding this past, such as recognition of survivors' suffering, are not broadly socialized. Sri Lestari Wahyuningroem, "Seducing for Truth and Justice: Civil Society Initiatives for the 1965 Mass Violence in Indonesia," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32, no. 3 (2013): 135.
4. For an overview of the strengths and limitations of truth commissions and trials, see Naomi Roht-Arriaza, "The New Landscape of Transitional Justice," in *Transitional Justice in the Twenty First Century: Beyond Truth versus Justice*, ed. Naomi Roht-Arriaza and Javier Mariezcurrena (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3–8.
5. See Dustin N. Sharp, "Interrogating the Peripheries: The Preoccupations of Fourth Generation Transitional Justice," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 26 (2012): 159–78.
6. Andreas Huyssen, "International Human Rights and the Politics of Memory: Limits and Challenges," *Criticism* 53, no. 4 (2011): 612.
7. Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labours of Memory*, trans. Judy Ryan and Marcial Godoy-Anatibia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 33–6.
8. Francesca Lessa and Cara Levey, "From Blanket Impunity to Judicial Openings: H.I.J.O.S. and Memory Making in Post-Dictatorial Argentina (2005–2012)," *Latin American Perspectives* 42, no. 3 (2015): 207–25.
9. For some scholarly discussion of the KKPK, see Wahyuningroem, "Seducing for Truth and Justice," 115–42; and Annie Pohlman, "A Year of Truth Telling: Possibilities for Reconciliation," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 10, no. 1 (2016): 60–78. For some studies of the H.I.J.O.S., see

- Susana Kaiser, "Escrachés: Demonstrations, Communication and Political Memory in Post-Dictatorial Argentina," *Media, Culture and Society* 24, no. 4 (2002): 499–516; Diana Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 161–89; Katja Seidel, "The Impossible Only Takes a Little Longer, or What May Be Learned from the Argentine Experience of Justice," *Social Anthropology* 19, no. 3 (2011): 305–12; Vincent Druliolle, "H.I.J.O.S. and the Spectacular Denunciation of Impunity: The Struggle for Memory, Truth, and Justice and the (Re-)Construction of Democracy in Argentina," *Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 2 (2013): 259–76; Lessa and Levey, "From Blanket Impunity to Judicial Openings."
10. *Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity* (United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 2005).
  11. J. Patrice McSherry, "Military Power, Impunity and State-Society Change in Latin America," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 3 (1992): 470.
  12. Wright goes too far when he suggests that impunity completely collapsed. Thomas C. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights and Democracy: Chile and Argentina, 1990–2005* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 2. For a critique, see the review of this work by J. Patrice McSherry in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 35, no. 4 (2016): 527–9.
  13. For an overview of Latin American repressions and the Cold War context, see Cecilia Menjívar and Néstor Rodríguez, *When States Kill: Latin America, the US and Technologies of Terror* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); and Marcia Esparza et al., eds., *State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: The Cold War Years* (London: Routledge, 2010).
  14. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 131–94.
  15. Bernd Schaefer and Baskara Wardaya, eds., *1965 Indonesia and the World* (Jakarta: Gramedia, Pustaka Utama, 2013).
  16. John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).
  17. The allegations of torture were unfounded. See Ben Anderson, "How Did the Generals Die?" *Indonesia*, no. 43 (1987): 109–34.
  18. Jess Melvin, *The Army and the Indonesian Genocide: Mechanics of Mass Murder* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).
  19. Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 160–61.
  20. For an overview of NU's role, see Greg Fealy and Katharine McGregor, "Nahdlatul Ulama and the Killings of 1965–66: Religion, Politics and Remembrance," *Indonesia*, no. 89 (2010): 37–60. On the role of the Church in Eastern Indonesia, see Mery Kolimon et al., *Forbidden Memories: Women's Experiences of 1965 in Eastern Indonesia* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Press, 2015).
  21. Robert Cribb, "Introduction," in *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–66: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Press, 1990), 12.
  22. See Vannessa Hearman, "Dismantling the Fortress: East Java and the Transition to Suharto's New Order Regime (1965–68)" (PhD thesis, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2012).
  23. There are extremely varied estimates of the number of people detained due to the fact that many people were only briefly detained then killed. In 1977, for example, Amnesty International reported official estimates of 750,000. Amnesty International, *Indonesia: An Amnesty International Report* (London: Amnesty International, 1977), 41. On the case for a larger number, see Douglas Kammen and Faizah Zakaria, "Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia, 1965–1968," *Critical Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2012): 441–66.
  24. Annie Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
  25. Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, trans. James P. Brennan (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 91–127.
  26. J. Patrice McSherry, *Incomplete Transition: Military Power and Democracy in Argentina* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 78.

27. See Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford Scholarship Online) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 134.
28. Daniel Feierstein, "Political Violence in Argentina and its Genocidal Characteristics," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 2 (2006): 150.
29. On the Church, see Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War*, 130–34.
30. Guillermo Levy, "Consideration on the Connections between Race, Politics, Economics and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 2 (2006): 140–41.
31. Feierstein, "Political Violence in Argentina," 150.
32. Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War*, 133–5.
33. Levy, "Consideration on the Connections," 141.
34. For a similar focus on the economics of the Indonesian genocide, see Hilmar Farid, "Indonesia's Original Sin: Mass Killing and Capitalist Expansion, 1965–66," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (2005): 3–15.
35. Marie Trigona, "Argentina Mothers of Plaza de Mayo: Living Legacy of Hope and Human Rights," Women News Network, October 21, 2010, <https://womennewsnetwork.net/2010/10/21/argentina-mothers> (accessed June 3, 2016).
36. For some analysis of their impact locally and internationally, see Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 109–40.
37. Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*, 173.
38. McSherry, *Incomplete Transition*, 103–6.
39. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights and Democracy*, 24.
40. *Nunca Más: The Report of the Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986).
41. *Ibid.*, 446–9.
42. Emilio Crenzel, "Revisiting the Origins of Argentina's Military Junta Trial: Political, Moral and Legal Dilemmas of a Transitional Justice Strategy," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 42, no. 2 (2017): 150–54.
43. For a detailed analysis of these processes, see McSherry, *Incomplete Transition*, 117–47.
44. McSherry, "Military Power," 474.
45. *Ibid.*, 475.
46. *Ibid.*, 478.
47. The confession was first published in Spanish in March 1995 in the book entitled *El Vuelo* (*Espejo de Argentina*), (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1995). The taped confessions were also broadcast on radio and television. Horacio Verbitsky, *The Flight: Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior: A First Hand Account of Atrocity*, trans. Ester Allen (London: The New Press, 1996), 22–5, 48–52.
48. Sikkink, "From Pariah to Global Protagonist," 12–13. For more on CELS, see <https://www.cels.org.ar/web/> (accessed April 30, 2016).
49. "Argentina's Enlightened Chief of Staff," *The New York Times*, October 27, 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/27/opinion/argentina-s-enlightened-chief-of-staff.html> (accessed April 27, 2016).
50. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights and Democracy*, 100.
51. On the grandmothers (*abuelas*) and their activism, see <https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/English/media.htm>, <https://www.abuelas.org.ar/> (accessed April 30, 2016).
52. Katharine McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).
53. Farid, "Indonesia's Original Sin," 5–9.
54. Katharine McGregor, "Confronting the Past in Contemporary Indonesia: The Anti-Communist Killings of 1965–66 and the Role of the Nahdlatul Ulama," *Critical Asian Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 195–224.
55. Katharine McGregor, "Mass Graves and Memory of the 1965–66 Killings," in *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–1968*, ed. Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (SEAP



- Series) (Singapore: Singapore University Press, University of Hawaii Press and KITLV, 2012), 234–62.
56. Suzannah Linton, "Accounting for Atrocities in Indonesia," *Singapore Year Book of International Law* 10 (2006): 199–231.
  57. This paragraph draws on Ken Setiawan, "From Hope to Disillusion: The Paradox of komnas ham, the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission," *Bidragen tot de taal, land-en volkenkunde* 172, no. 1 (2016): 15–26.
  58. Mark Cammack, "Crimes against Humanity in East Timor: The Indonesian Ad Hoc Human Rights Court Hearings," in *Trials for International Crimes in Asia*, ed. Kristin Stellars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 224.
  59. Suparman Marzuki, *Tragedi politik hukum HAM* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2011), 364–7.
  60. Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, "Politics of Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 37, no. 1 (2007): 73–9.
  61. For a broader discussion of "pacts of impunity" across Latin America, see McSherry, "Military Power," 469–72.
  62. Komnasham, *Pernyataan komnas ham tentang hasil penyelidikan pelanggaran HAM yang berat Persitiwa 1965–1966*, <http://stopimpunity.org/sources/108-komnas-ham-executif-summary-peristiwa-1965-2012> (accessed April 20, 2016).
  63. Ibid.
  64. Ibid.
  65. "H.I.J.O.S. 1995," as quoted in Druliolle, "H.I.J.O.S. and the Spectacular Denunciation of Impunity," 264. See also the H.I.J.O.S. website: <http://www.hijos-capital.org.ar/> (accessed March 15, 2016).
  66. See testimonies of stolen grandchildren and grandmothers in *Argentina—Who Am I?*, BBC Our World Series, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=143\\_dvp6mwQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=143_dvp6mwQ) (accessed June 24, 2017). All translations from subtitles provided.
  67. English excerpt from the video *Escrache a Videla*, Colectivo de comunicación Popular, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGFOZWRxK1g> (accessed June 24, 2017). All translations from subtitles provided.
  68. Kaiser, "Escraches," 502–3.
  69. This paragraph draws on Druliolle, "H.I.J.O.S. and the Spectacular Denunciation of Impunity," 266–9.
  70. Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*, 185–7.
  71. Ibid., 162.
  72. This paragraph is based on observations and quotes from *escrache* organizers documented by Juan Monasterio in *H I J O S mesa de escrache*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBQCXRQpQg> (accessed June 24, 2017). All translations from subtitles provided.
  73. See Druliolle, "H.I.J.O.S. and the Spectacular Denunciation of Impunity," 269–70.
  74. See also Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*, 182–3.
  75. Juan Monasterio in *H I J O S mesa de escrache*.
  76. Ibid.
  77. Ibid.
  78. Ibid.
  79. Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*, 165.
  80. Seidel, "The Impossible Only Takes a Little Longer," 308.
  81. Druliolle, "H.I.J.O.S. and the Spectacular Denunciation of Impunity," 272.
  82. Quotes from *escrache* participant in Monasterio, *H I J O S mesa de escrache*.
  83. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights and Democracy*, 102–3.
  84. Sikkink, "From Pariah to Global Protagonist," 13–14.
  85. Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to Struggle in Latin America and Spain* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 101.
  86. Sebastian Brett et al., *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action* (Conference report, International Conference, Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action, Santiago, Chile, June 20–22, 2007), 22.



87. Sikkink, "From Pariah to Global Protagonist," 17–22.
88. Wright, *Impunity, Human Rights and Democracy*, 96–7.
89. Lessa and Levey, "From Blanket Impunity to Judicial Openings," 211–22.
90. Kathryn Sikkink, *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2011), 87–95.
91. Report of the UN working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, question of the human rights of all persons subjected to any form of detention or imprisonment/question of enforced or voluntary disappearances, E/CN/1990/13, January 24, 1990.
92. *Updated set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights*.
93. This included the well-known international or national-level organizations AJAR (Asia Justice and Rights), Kontras, Elsam (Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat) and Imparsial, and Indonesian regional organizations such as JPIT (Jaringan Perempuan Indonesia Timur) and SKP HAM Palu and the survivor organization YPKP (Yayasan Peneliitan dan Korban Pembunuhan). For a full list of members, see "Tentang KKPK," <http://kkpk.org/tentang-kkpk> (accessed March 20, 2015).
94. Wahyuningroem, "Seducing for Truth and Justice," 136–7.
95. KKPK 1, vi.
96. Zainal Abidin, "Dinamika penyelesaian pelanggaran ham masa lalu: konsisten dengan komitmen awal atau mencari jalan baru?" *Asasi*, March–April 2012, 6.
97. Wahyuningroem, "Seducing for Truth and Justice," 128–9.
98. Kolimon et al., *Forbidden Memories*.
99. Kurniawan et al., *Pengakuan algojo 1965: investigasi Tempo perihal pembantaian 1965* (Jakarta: Tempo Publishing, 2013), ix.
100. Michael Bachelard, "Filmmaker Fears Reprisals for Exposé on Mass Murders," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 24, 2012, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/filmmaker-fears-reprisals-for-expos233-on-mass-murders-20121123-29ypj.html> (accessed December 10, 2012); "NU adukan Tempo ke dewan pers," *Antara News*, October 28, 2012, <http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/340894/nu-adukan-majalah-tempo-ke-dewan-pers> (accessed December 10, 2012).
101. Pohlman, "A Year of Truth Telling," 68–9.
102. KKPK 1, vi.
103. See "Tahun Kebenaran," <http://kkpk.org/tahun-kebenaran> (accessed July 16, 2016).
104. *Menemukan Indonesia kembali* 1, 13.
105. See, for example, *Dengar kesaksian Kupang NTT, guru anggotta Gerwani*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AywAqfhUx94>; *Dengar kesaksian Kupang NTT, "tragedi 1965"*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNK3sjt1Fk> (accessed April 29, 2016).
106. KKPK 1, 12–13.
107. *Ibid.*, 13.
108. For some of the entries, see <http://www.kompetisi.kkpk.org> (accessed July 16, 2016).
109. KKPK 1, 1.
110. Sharp, "Interrogating the Peripheries," 160–68.
111. KKPK 1, 4–5.
112. *Ibid.*, 7–11.
113. *Ibid.*
114. "Pemerintah bentuk komite rekonsiliasi kasus HAM masa lalu," May 22, 2015, <http://www.voaindonesia.com/articleprintview/2782694.html> (accessed July 16, 2016).
115. Ni Komang Erviani and Erkia Anindita, "Ubud Festival Banned from Discussing 1965 Massacre," *The Jakarta Post*, October 23, 2015, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/10/23/ubud-festival-banned-discussing-1965-massacre.html> (accessed October 30, 2015).
116. For more on the IPT, see the official website: <http://tribunal1965.org/en/> (accessed April 1, 2016).
117. Indra Akuntono, "Jaksa agung: masalah HAM kita selesaikan sendiri," *Kompas*, November 10, 2015.

118. Kamala Chandrakirana, speech on Day 2 of *Simposium Nasional membedah tragedy 1965, pendekatan kesejarahan*, April 18–19, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlzcCldf61U> (3 hours 2 minutes) (accessed April 19, 2016).
119. Chandrakirana, speech on Day 2. For written documentation of this plan, see “Satya Pilar: Jalan Indonesia,” *Kabar KPPK* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–2.
120. Agus Widjojo’s speech on Day 2 of *Simposium Nasional membedah tragedy 1965, pendekatan kesejarahan*, April 18–19, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlzcCldf61U> (2 hours 18 minutes) (accessed April 19, 2016).
121. For his speech, see also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUUfIED4g8o> (accessed April 19, 2016).
122. “Pemerintah diminta akui terlibat peristiwa 1965,” CNN Indonesia, April 19, 2016, <http://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20160419194718-20-125116/simposium-pemerintah-diminta-akui-terlibat-peristiwa-1965> (accessed April 21, 2017).
123. Baskara Wardaya, email communication, April 26, 2017.
124. Marguerite Afra Sapiie, “Govt to Draft Recommendation from 1965 National Symposium,” *The Jakarta Post*, May 31, 2016, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/05/31/govt-to-draft-recommendation-from-1965-national-symposium.html> (accessed June 20, 2017).
125. “Wiranto mangkir dari panggilan ombudsman RI: pengingkaran terhadap hukum,” Kontras Homepage, March 31, 2017, <http://www.kontras.org/home/index.php?id=2368&module=pers> (accessed June 20, 2017).