

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Peru: Amnesty International calls for guarantees that human rights will be respected during protests in Piura and Cajamarca

Amnesty International urges the authorities and local people to do everything possible to guarantee respect for and the protection of human rights during the protests planned in San Ignacio, in the Cajamarca region, and Huancabamba and Ayabaca, in the Piura region. Local people in these areas have called a 24 hour strike and march for 17 August 2005, to demand the withdrawal of a British mining company from Huancabamba and Ayabaca because of the environmental impact that the company's operations may have in the area, where the main economic activity is agriculture.

The human rights organisation expressed serious concern that the protests will result in human rights violations, like those denounced at the beginning of August, this year. On that occasion, reports indicate that members of the security forces may have used excessive force and that ronderos (community self-defence groups) of the affected villages committed violent acts.

Amnesty International recalled that the events of August 2005 left at least one person dead and dozens injured. Several people were detained, although they were later released. Some of them complained they had been ill-treated and tortured while in police custody. The events occurred after ronderos took over the British company's mining camp.

The organisation urges the Peruvian authorities to carry out an impartial and exhaustive investigation of these serious events and avoid their repetition.

Amnesty International reminded the Peruvian authorities of the fundamental fact that the rule of law requires respect for the freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by the Constitution, as well as by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Peru.

The organisation also stated that in situations such as this one in Ayabaca and Huancabamba, it is indispensable to consult the affected communities before undertaking or authorising any exploitation of natural resources, as indicated in Convention 169 of the International Labour Office, which Peru ratified in 1994. Such a dialogue should be conducted in a transparent way, with representatives chosen by the communities, said Amnesty International.

Moreover, independent and impartial studies should be conducted to evaluate the social and environmental impact of the exploitation of natural resources. The evaluation results should be considered when implementing such projects, concluded the human rights organisation.

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