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Peru: Justice without discrimination for the victims of Amazon violence

The Peruvian authorities must conduct fair and impartial investigations into the deaths of all those killed during violence at a road blockade led by Amazon Indigenous peoples in June, Amnesty International said in a new report.

The organisation urged full investigations into the deaths of 10 Indigenous and local people alongside those already underway into the killings of 23 police officers during the incident.

At least 200 people were also injured on 5 June after police intervened to end a peaceful protest by thousands of people over the use of land and resources on a road near Bagua in northern Peru.

“Measures must be taken to bring all the alleged perpetrators of these serious abuses to justice and provide reparation to all the victims”, said Guadalupe Marengo, Deputy Americas Director at Amnesty International.

Thousands of Indigenous people had been peacefully blockading the road for over 50 days in protest against new legislation which they claim poses a threat to their livelihood.

The report reveals that while protesters have been detained and charged in connection with the deaths of the police, none of those suspected of involvement in deaths and injuries of protesters have so far been charged

Indigenous leaders have also faced intimidation and harassment from the authorities.

“Harassment and intimidation of Indigenous leaders has to stop and the right of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent on any decision which could affect their right to land and resources must be guaranteed”, said Guadalupe Marengo.

During its investigation, Amnesty International spoke to witnesses and relatives of those killed, who revealed new details about the eruption of violence.

One of the individuals that Amnesty International spoke to was Violeta Piitug Wampush, the widow of Felipe Sabio César Sánchez, an Indigenous leader from the small Indigenous community of Wawás and a reporter for a local radio station.

He was shot dead on his way out of Bagua’s hospital, where he had gone to report on Indigenous people killed and injured that day.

“Just as they are acknowledging the police officers [who died on 5 June] as servants of the state, they should acknowledge [my] husband too ... [he] fell in defence of the Amazon territory” she told Amnesty International.

Eleven of the 23 police officers were killed while they were held hostage by Indigenous protesters and the whereabouts of one police officer remain unknown.

Flor de María Vásquez, the wife of Comandante Miguel Antón Montenegro Castillo, one of the police officers killed on 5 June, is still waiting for answers to why the police didn't send more reinforcements to help them.

“This is a situation that could have been avoided beforehand, they could have rescued them, they could have saved them. Why didn't they get there? That's the explanation that they haven't given us,” she told Amnesty International.