

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 18/009/2003 (Public)  
News Service No: 234  
13 October 2003

## **Bolivia: The present crisis calls for effective measures to protect human rights and the rule of law.**

Around 20 people, including one minor, died and more than one hundred were injured as the combined forces of the army and police force were deployed in the area of el Alto, near La Paz, to clear blocked roads and contain the popular demonstrations taking place between 11 and 12 October.

According to information received, most of the victims had received bullet wounds. The joint forces' use of large calibre combat ammunition and the tragic consequences of the military operation have been criticised by representatives of the Catholic Church and members of the non-governmental organisation Permanent Human Rights Assembly (*Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos*), who have been endeavouring to facilitate a dialogue.

"The endeavours of the Catholic Church and the *Asamblea Permanente* to find an effective route to dialogue in this national emergency ought to be echoed by the national authorities" said Amnesty International. "It is a matter of growing concern that the Bolivian authorities have not made any proposals for an effective process to resolve the present crisis and avoiding further clashes and loss of life."

The organisation urges the authorities to maintain effective control of the forces charged with maintaining order, in particular with regard to the excessive use of force against demonstrators.

"The use of the security forces must be in accordance with the provisions of the Codes of Conduct and Basic Principles of the United Nations" stressed Amnesty International "Any action taken by the state must demonstrate a total respect for human rights."

Amnesty International calls on the Bolivian authorities to ensure that, when formulating economic policy, account is taken of international standards on human rights and that the necessary steps are taken as laid down in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, thus recognising the indivisibility of human rights.

"It is the responsibility of the Bolivian authorities to protect the life and physical integrity of the population, opening up routes for dialogue and taking rational measures to avoid further loss of life in the present crisis in Bolivia. The government must respect its international commitments and its own Constitution" concluded Amnesty International.

Amnesty International once again calls on the Bolivian authorities to carry out immediate, impartial and conclusive investigations into these tragic events and stresses the importance of having

these investigations conducted by the ordinary courts. Furthermore, the organisation requests that the terms of reference of the investigation and its conclusions be made public. The organisation requests that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

#### General information

The demonstrations and roadblocks that have been set up around the country and, in particular, in the area of the Bolivian Altiplano since 19 September by peasants, miners and trade unionists are demanding that the Government abandon its plans for the sale of gas and approve a programme that will benefit local residents, along with other sectoral demands. The escalation of violence in the country has resulted in more than 20 deaths, including two minors.

The fundamental right to life, health and security are established in Article 7 a) of the State Constitution. The authorities must uphold this important rule, which is also enshrined in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**If you would like a copy of Amnesty International's Public Communication to the Bolivian authorities of 23 September 2003 (Index: AMR 18/08/2003), please contact the Amnesty International press office in London.**

#### Public Document

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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