

AI Index: PRE 01/275/2008
07 November 2008

Peru: Amnesty bill setback to human rights

(Santiago, Chile) Amnesty International is urging the Peruvian parliament not to approve a bill currently in Congress which would grant amnesty to alleged perpetrators of human rights violations.

Speaking from Chile, where earlier today she presented a memorandum calling for the annulment of the 1978 Amnesty Law, Irene Khan, Amnesty International's Secretary General said: "If approved, this bill would be a major step backwards for the rule of law in Peru as it would effectively grant impunity for individuals who could be responsible for human rights violations."

"We've witnessed the negative impact amnesty laws have had in Peru and across countries in the region in the past. The illegality of such amnesty laws has been recognised by the Inter American Court of Human Rights (IACHR)."

An amnesty law that was passed in 1997 in Peru, but then derogated in 2002, was condemned by IACHR in the well known cases of Barrios Altos and La Cantuta.

The new bill was presented on Thursday by the president of the Defence Commission in Congress Edgar Nunez and has been supported by more than 20 members of Congress from a variety of parties.

If passed, the bill would not only grant amnesty to members of the military and police involved in violations of human rights committed in the past in the case of Chavin de Huantar, but would also support the creation of a mechanism which would grant amnesty for violations of human rights committed by the military and police in general.

The bill would also deny victims and their families the right to learn the truth about the past or to obtain reparations.

Amnesty International believes that, instead of granting impunity to perpetrators of human rights violations, the government should concentrate on bringing them to trial. That should include those involved in violations committed before 1990.