

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 18/012/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 240
17 October 2003

Bolivia: Put an end to the alarming deterioration of Human Rights in the country

In the light of recent developments in the Human Rights crisis in which the country is immersed, Amnesty International reiterates its urgent call to the authorities and to all sectors of Bolivian society to prevent an increase in the escalation of violence and further bloodshed.

"The spiral of violence must be stopped", said Amnesty International. "The authorities must give orders to the highest levels of the security forces to refrain from using excessive force against demonstrators."

According to information received by Amnesty International, the number of deaths since mid-September exceeds 70 and hundreds of people have been injured. Reports indicate that the majority of victims were wounded by gunshot.

"The Bolivian state has both the right and the obligation to maintain public order and respect for the law" said Amnesty International. "However, the authorities also have the unavoidable obligation to respect and protect at every juncture the right to life, to physical integrity and to freedom of expression of the whole population, as prescribed by international law."

Amnesty International has mobilized its members throughout the world to make an urgent appeal to the Bolivian authorities and to the international community regarding the emergency that Bolivia is experiencing in relation to respect for human rights.

"Thousands of members and supporters of Amnesty International all over the world are on the alert and are appealing to the Bolivian government to commit to finding a solution which will allow the basic human rights of the Bolivian people to be respected," Amnesty International emphasized.

As a protest against the deterioration of the situation, the high cost of life and the absence of solutions which allow respect for human rights, intellectuals, artists, representatives of the Catholic Church, members of indigenous communities and human rights activists have begun a hunger strike to call international attention to the crisis in Bolivia.

"It is unacceptable for the authorities to allow the present crisis to turn into a human rights disaster. It is time for the government to take concrete steps to avoid further bloodshed and to commit to respecting the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all," Amnesty International concluded.

Public Document

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>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>