

Peru: International Week of Action to Stop Torture

In a week of action to stop torture, Amnesty International's youth and student members in Peru and around the world will be calling for a public commitment from the presidential candidates, should they be elected President of Peru, to eradicate torture.

Throughout the week of 19-25 March 2001, in advance of presidential elections in April 2001, thousands of the organization's youth and student members and activists will be mobilizing on the streets to stop the widespread use of torture in Peru.

Amnesty International's student activists from all over the world will show solidarity with their Peruvian counterparts by taking action against torture in their own countries. Peruvian youth and student activists will also be urging the Peruvian general population to use their vote to show solidarity against torture, and to declare their city or locality a "Torture Free Zone".

"Torture is widespread in Peru," said Javier Zuñiga, Amnesty International's Americas Program Director. "However, Peru is going through a critical stage in its history, so there is now a window of opportunity which the Peruvian people must seize and which the Presidential candidates must take."

The organization hopes that this renewed pressure on Peru, which is being echoed within the country as well as internationally, will ensure that the new President, who will take up office in July 2001, will make concrete steps towards ending torture in Peru and promoting human rights.

During the week of action, activists will carry out a wide range of activities, from holding demonstrations in front of Peruvian embassies and consulates, to publicly highlighting Amnesty International's cases of torture and ill-treatment by the Peruvian security forces. These cases include the torture of two young boys whilst in police custody: 13-year-old Luis Alberto Taipe Huamaní was tortured in police detention in the province of La Merced, whilst 16-year-old Huber Méndez Barzola suffered torture at the hands of police in Huamanga police station where he was stripped naked, beaten, and a sharp object -- *huanchaco* -- was forced into his anus.

Background

Although the number of reported "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions have fallen in recent years, torture and ill-treatment, including death in custody, remains widespread in Peru. The Peruvian authorities have passed legislation making torture a punishable offence. However, since the legislation was adopted in February 1998, only two police officers have been brought to justice under this law.

Amnesty International delivered a letter to all the Presidential candidates on 12 March 2001 urging them to help eradicate torture in Peru by prioritizing the protection of human rights.

\ENDS

public document

Note to Editors:

To mark the week of action, Amnesty International Peru will be holding a **press conference** on 19 March 2001 in the offices of Amnesty International Peru, Enrique Palacios, 735a Miraflores, Lima 18, Peru (Casilla 659), and a **public event** in the Plaza Mayor de Lima. Letters will be delivered to the mayor of Lima and to the President, and the event will end with a candlelight vigil. For more information please call

Teresa Carpio, Amnesty International Peru, on + 511 447 13 60, or
Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413
5566 web : <http://www.amnesty.org>