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Bolivia: Government inaction following demonstrators' deaths

Following the use of lethal force by security forces during the past few days of confrontation with demonstrators in La Paz and El Chapare, Amnesty International is calling on the Bolivian authorities to abide by international standards on the use of force, to investigate the events and to disclose the whereabouts, numbers and identities of those arrested, injured or killed.

Members of the police, army and *Unidad Móvil de Patrullaje Rural*, Mobile Patrol Unit (UMOPAR), have fired on demonstrators supporting the general strike called by the *Central Obrera Boliviana* since 1 April to date. According to reports, there are at least 10 people dead and dozens injured.

Amnesty International has received information that a teacher, Enrique Candia, had his leg amputated following a bullet fired by police in La Paz. In El Chapare region coca leaf growers, Benito Mamani was shot dead, while Agapito Checa died as a result being beaten by members of the UMOPAR. More than 50 people, including women and minors, have also been injured during the activities of the security forces in the towns of Villa Tunari and Shinahota. In Shinahota, tear gas canisters were thrown into the school affecting several children.

“The UMOPAR has a disturbing record of using brutal force and now the inaction of the authorities has covered up the scale of the recent atrocities,” Amnesty International said. “The lack of confirmed official information has created a climate of anguish for families who have attempted to claim for unaccounted relatives.”

In a worrying development, members of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, visiting El Chapare to gather information, were reportedly harassed by members of UMOPAR.

Amnesty International is urging the authorities to return the dead to their relatives, which were reportedly taken away by the UMOPAR, and initiate an immediate and thorough investigation into the circumstances of the events. The authorities should also provide information on the whereabouts and legal status of the dozen of trade unionists reportedly arrested. There should be a guarantee for their physical safety or their release if they are not charged with a criminal offence.

The organization believes it imperative that clear and unequivocal instructions be given to all levels of UMOPAR and the security forces that human rights violations will not be tolerated.
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