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**PERU: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REITERATES CALL FOR THE SAFE
RELEASE OF MRTA HOSTAGES**

The well being and safe release of the 72 MRTA hostages -- now in captivity for 100 days -- should remain at the centre of any resolution of the hostages crisis, Amnesty International said today.

The organization reiterates its appeal to the armed opposition group *Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru*, MRTA, Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, to immediately and unconditionally release the hostages.

Amnesty International also calls on MRTA and the Peruvian authorities to bring about a prompt solution to the hostage crisis. This solution should continue to aim at the safe release of the hostages.

“Hostage-taking is totally unacceptable. It is an act which threatens the fundamental right to life, personal integrity and liberty, and is expressly prohibited by internationally recognised humanitarian law. Under no circumstances is the taking of hostages justifiable,” Amnesty International said.

The hostage crisis began on the evening of 17 December last year, when a heavily armed unit of the MRTA broke into the residence of the Japanese Ambassador in the capital Lima, during a function to celebrate Emperor Akihito's birthday. The MRTA unit, which took some 700 people captive and included among their demands the release of imprisoned MRTA members, initially threatened to kill their captives.

During the first six weeks of the hostage crisis the MRTA released some 620 hostages. However, 72 people still remain captive in the Ambassadors residence. They include Peru's ministers of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, other Peruvian authorities, a brother of President Alberto Fujimori, the Japanese and Bolivian Ambassadors and prominent Japanese businessmen.

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