

PERU: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS THE INTOLERABLE SITUATION OF INNOCENT PRISONERS AND URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE THEM

Amnesty International has adopted 122 people falsely accused of terrorism in Peru as prisoners of conscience, but this is only a small fraction of the total number of innocent people who are being detained in Peruvian prisons today.

An Amnesty International delegation is currently visiting Peru to launch its report, *Peru: Prisoners of Conscience*. The delegation is also holding talks with the Minister of Justice, Carlos Hermoza Moya, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francisco Tudela.

“We urge the Government of Peru to free all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally. We want to point out that, for each case that becomes known, for each case that becomes news, there are many others who will remain for ever unknown,” the human rights organization said.

These prisoners are women and men who have been deprived of their freedom without any reliable evidence linking them to armed opposition groups. This is the situation of Myriam Guadalupe Gálvez Vargas, who has been in prison, separated from her children, for three years solely on the basis that she had attended a university course taught by a professor accused of terrorism-related crimes.

The anti-terrorism legislation introduced by the Government of Alberto Fujimori is at the basis of the current situation. While acknowledging the right of the Peruvian State to combat armed opposition groups, Amnesty International severely criticises the current anti-terrorism legislation on the grounds that it does not respect international law and contributes to the imprisonment of innocent people.

Amnesty International acknowledges that positive anti-terrorism legislative reforms have been approved, inter alia the amendment adopted last March which allows for an acquitted defendant to be issued with a summons rather than being returned to prison. However, even though members of parliament from both the governing and opposition parties have presented a number of legislative proposals aimed at resolving the problem of prisoners of conscience, none of these has yet been debated in Congress.

Amnesty International insists on the need to respect international human rights law and urges the Government of Peru to:

- release all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally;
- compensate the victims of arbitrary detention; and

- take the necessary steps to ensure that all persons detained and accused of terrorism crimes receive a prompt and fair trial.

Amnesty International's report also highlights the atrocities carried out by the armed opposition groups *Sendero Luminoso*, Shining Path, *Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru*, Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, and, in recent years, *Sendero Rojo*, Red Path. The human rights organization strongly condemns these abuses and calls on the leaders of these groups to abide by international humanitarian law.

ENDS/