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Peru: A National Human Rights Plan is key to ending the consequences of internal conflict

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(Madrid - Lima) One year on from publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, the Peruvian government needs to show the necessary political will to put an end to impunity for human rights violations committed during the 20 years of internal conflict, Nuria García, Amnesty International's Peru researcher said today.

In a new report published today, Amnesty International urges the Peruvian government to establish a National Human Rights Plan comprising concrete measures to ensure truth, justice and reparation and to eliminate impunity and discrimination in the country.

According to the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación -- CVR), almost 24,000 people died or "disappeared" during Peru's internal armed conflict. Most were indigenous or peasant farmers, living in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty. The CVR also concluded that racial and gender discrimination had contributed to the fact that these violations were committed with impunity for years, and not denounced by the general public.

"The Peruvian government must build on the progress made by the CVR in the fight against impunity in terms of the 43 cases presented to the Government Attorney's Office. All complaints of human rights violations must be exhaustively investigated, and those responsible brought to justice via the civil courts and punished according to the severity of the crime. Reparation measures must be both individual and collective, and proportional to the severity of the human rights violation suffered," said Ms. García.

Moreover, in order to combat discrimination against women, indigenous peoples and peasant farmers, the authorities must periodically review legislation to ensure that discrimination on the basis of race, sexual orientation or ethnic group is not being promoted and to improve legislative effectiveness in eliminating such discrimination.

The Plan must also include measures to promote and guarantee respect for economic, social and cultural rights -- including the right to the highest level of health, the right to freely chosen or accepted work, the right to education, and the right of all people to an adequate standard of living in terms of food, clothing and housing.

"Since the end of the conflict, impunity and discrimination have continued to affect the capacity of thousands of Peruvians to exercise their rights fully. Both the authorities and society have a responsibility to ensure that Peru becomes a country in which equal opportunities are a reality for all," concluded Ms. García.

Background information

Established in 2001, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's mandate was to establish the circumstances surrounding the human rights violations and abuses committed between May 1980 and November 2000 both by Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the MRTA as well as the Peruvian State. In addition, it was to establish the whereabouts, identity and situation of the victims of the internal conflict and, and far as possible, responsibilities, to develop proposals for reparation of the victims and suggest measures and reforms to prevent such incidents from re-occurring.

On 26 August 2003, the Commission presented its Final Report containing the conclusions of its research and concrete recommendations aimed at the Peruvian government.

Most of the proposals require no substantial financial input. Others are deeper structural reforms or reforms that require changes in the culture and perceptions of broad sectors of Peruvian society. These will therefore require a long-term programme of reform.

For more information, see Amnesty International's report: "Perú: La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación - un primer paso hacia un país sin injusticia", at: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engamr460032004>

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