

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 8 NOVEMBER 1991

CORRECTION TO PERU NEWS RELEASE

Dear friends,

You have probably noticed already that the date on the first page of the Peru News Release, which was sent to you last night, was incorrect. It should read 21 November 1991.

I am sorry for the mistake, the correct text follows:

AI Index: AMR

46/70/91

Distr:SC/PO

0001 hrs gmt Thursday 21 November 1991

£PERU:
@HUNDREDS KILLED, "DISAPPEARED" DESPITE
HUMAN RIGHTS PLEDGES

More than two hundred people in Peru were unlawfully killed or "disappeared" at the hands of the security forces this past year -- some in brutal massacres of entire families -- despite the president's repeated promises to respect human rights, Amnesty International said today.

"The reality of human rights in Peru is still a far cry from the pledges made more than a year ago," the human rights organization said.

"We've seen hundreds more Peruvians fall victim to brutal abuses, heard the president lash out against human rights activists, and are still waiting for the full action needed to change the course of human rights in Peru."

In a new report released today, Amnesty International said that since the new government took office in July 1990 some 250 people have "disappeared" or been extrajudicially executed, the majority in the country's military-run emergency zones -- but that the true toll of victims will likely never be known.

And despite the significant number of gross violations committed by the military under the new government, few judicial investigations have been carried out and no one is known to have been convicted.

"We believe that a sense of impunity pervades the armed forces," the organization said in a letter to President Fujimori, also made public today. "It is a deadly and dangerous attitude that gathers strength from the continued failure to bring military perpetrators to justice and convict them."

In that letter, Amnesty International also said it was shocked by the president's recent blanket condemnation of human rights groups as "the legal arm of subversion" and "agents of terror" - a denunciation the organization fears could lead to more threats and attacks on activists.

The organization said the gross violations that have marked Peru for almost a decade often take place in revenge raids on peasant communities following attacks by the armed opposition group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA) -- in some cases entire communities have been punished for opposition group atrocities.

The mass extrajudicial executions of peasants and suspected government opponents have continued under the new government, with at least five massacres by the security forces since mid-1990. Some 16 people, one as young as 11, were reportedly shot dead by soldiers and civil defence patrols in August 1990 in a massacre after they refused to join in an attack on the Shining Path. In May of this year, six other peasants were allegedly killed by soldiers posing as members of Shining Path.

Since July 1990, as well, close to 200 peasants and others have "disappeared", mostly from emergency zones, where the military has been known to assume that people support the opposition simply because they live

in areas of armed insurgency. People "disappear" on the spot or after being arbitrarily arrested and most are never seen again. Those who are freed have often been tortured first; some have later been found alive, dumped, bound and gagged, from an army vehicle, with no record of ever having been detained.

In its report, the organization strongly condemns atrocities committed by the MRTA and, in particular, by Shining Path, which has been responsible for the brutal killing of thousands of non-combatant civilians and captive troops since 1980 in clear breach of humanitarian standards. In the past decade, Shining Path has killed some 90 mayors in Peru and recently has killed a number of foreign nationals, including a nun, priests and development workers.

In its letter to the president, the organization said that such abuses, however, can never be used as an excuse for security force violations. "The terror tactics of opposition groups can never justify counter-terror by the forces of law and order," Amnesty International said.

The organization said it welcomed the government's recent positive steps towards protecting human rights, such as the granting of greater access to prosecutors investigating violations and access of the International Committee of the Red Cross to all places of detention.

More fundamental changes are needed in investigating violations and bringing those responsible to justice, the organization urged, such as moving human rights cases from military to civilian courts.

In the very few cases heard before military courts, there has never been a case which resulted in a member of the military being found guilty of committing human rights violations, even when the government has acknowledged that civilians were deliberately and arbitrarily killed.

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER 1991

Note to Editors: Please contact the International Secretariat Press Office for any further information on this news release or on Amnesty International's human rights concerns in Peru. Under Amnesty International's rules no member may be involved in actions on his or her own country: therefore the Peru Section of Amnesty International has played no part in collecting Amnesty International's information on Peru and is not permitted to answer queries on the organization's concerns there.