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PERU: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
WELCOMES JUDGE'S RULING ON BARRIOS
ALTOS MASSACRE

The ruling by an examining judge declaring that judicial investigations into the November 1991 Barrios Altos massacre should continue -- despite the promulgation last week of a wide-ranging amnesty law granting immunity to those responsible for past human rights violations in Peru -- constitutes a courageous rebuke of the amnesty law, Amnesty International said today.

On 16 June, the day on which the wide-ranging amnesty law came into effect, the judge ruled that the amnesty law was inapplicable to the proceedings against five members of the Peruvian army implicated in the massacre. In arriving at her ruling the judge invoked the Constitution of Peru, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the American Convention on Human Rights, to which Peru is party.

The five suspects, including an army general, are accused of murdering 15 people and seriously injuring a further four in a machine-gun attack on a barbecue party in a house in the centre of the capital, Lima. The accused -- who were already serving prison sentences for

their part in the murder of nine students and a professor from La Cantuta University in July 1992 -- were reportedly released immediately the amnesty law came into effect.

Amnesty International has already condemned in the strongest terms the recently passed amnesty law, which the organization has described as a measure destined to protect the perpetrators of thousands of human rights violations committed in Peru during the past 15 years.

"A law stipulating that investigations and judicial proceedings linked to gross human rights violations -- and which renders ineffective those few sentences handed down to human rights violators -- is an affront to the victims and their relatives," Amnesty International said.

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