

## PRESS RELEASE

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### IACHR CONDEMNS ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN PERU

Washington, D.C., June 8, 2009—The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) strongly condemns the acts of violence that took place on June 5 in Bagua, in northern Peru, which have caused a number of deaths.

According to the information received, at least 30 people have died and others have been wounded, including indigenous leaders and members of the security forces, as a result of an operation by the National Police of Peru to break up a blockade that indigenous groups had maintained on the highway leading to the city of Bagua. The act of protest had been organized by indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon region in response to legislative decrees affecting their property rights over their lands and territories. The Inter-American Commission reminds the State of its obligation to conduct a judicial inquiry into these acts of violence and repair the consequences.

The information received indicates that health centers in Bagua were not equipped to treat the large number of people injured. The IACHR calls on the Peruvian State to take the steps that are necessary to guarantee access to health care for all the injured.

The IACHR also calls on the parties to promote a process of dialogue to seek a solution that respects human rights. It is important to adopt mechanisms to prevent excessive use of force on the part of public agents in marches and protest demonstrations. As the IACHR has stated previously, "Criminalizing legitimate social mobilization and social protest, whether through direct repression of the demonstrators or through an investigation and criminal prosecution, is incompatible with a democratic society in which persons have the right to express their opinion."

Finally, the IACHR has learned that on May 9 the government had declared a state of emergency. The Commission offers a reminder that Article 27 of the American Convention on Human Rights and Advisory Opinion 9/87 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights specify the rights that cannot be suspended; these include, among others, the right to life, to physical integrity, and to the essential judicial guarantees necessary for these rights to be protected. In light of information received indicating that a number of people were arrested during the incidents with no report as to their identity or whereabouts, the IACHR calls on the Peruvian State to respect their right to physical integrity and to judicial guarantees.

A principal, autonomous body of the Organization of American States (OAS), the IACHR derives its mandate from the OAS Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights. The Inter-American Commission has the mandate to promote respect for human rights in the region and acts as a consultative body to the OAS in this matter. The Commission is composed of seven independent members who act in a personal capacity, without representing a particular country, and who are elected by the OAS General Assembly.

**Useful Links:**

- [Inter-American Convention on Human Rights](#)
- [Inter-American Court's Advisory Opinion No. 9/87](#)
- [IACHR Web site](#)
- [IACHR Press Office Web site](#)

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