

President Alan Garcia
Presidential Office
Jiron de la Union S/N
Lima 1, Peru

June 12, 2009

Dear President Garcia:

We are writing to express our deepest concern over the recent police attack on peaceful Indigenous protesters in Bagua, northern Peru. Eyewitness reports indicate that the police fired tear gas and live bullets that resulted in the deaths of both protesters and police officers. We strongly urge your administration to stand down immediately and refrain from using additional deadly force on Indigenous demonstrators.

The news of these deaths is of great concern to Canadians given that our country is close to implementing a free trade agreement with Peru. Canadian people and legislators are watching to see if your government will take immediate steps to defuse this situation while showing proper respect to the many thousands of Indigenous peoples currently exercising their legitimate rights to demand prior consultation or consent over development on their territories.

In the context of the free trade agreements with Canada and the United States, your administration has attempted to roll back the rights of Indigenous peoples and open the Amazon rainforest to increased extraction of natural resources by multinational corporations in contravention of international laws and conventions that guarantee the rights of Indigenous peoples, including those ratified by Peru.

One Canadian company who will benefit directly from this rollback of Indigenous rights is the Alberta-based petrochemical firm Petrolifera, with which your government recently signed an agreement allowing it to explore land inhabited by one of the world's last uncontacted tribes – a decision the Instituto del Bien Comun has appealed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. If this is what development looks like under free trade regimes then it is not the kind of development Canadians will support.

In September 2007, the Peruvian government demonstrated true leadership in introducing and supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the floor of the General Assembly. Today, your administration is acting in stark contrast to its stated commitment to this Declaration.

We respectfully urge your administration and the Peruvian Congress to:

1. Order an immediate cessation of violent police actions against peaceful protesters;
2. Suspend the state of emergency, withdraw your special forces and decriminalize peaceful protests;
3. Uphold the constitutionally guaranteed rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination, to their ancestral territories, and to prior consultation and consent for any policies and activities that will affect them;
4. Repeal the series of contested decrees passed when Congress offered fast track authority to create laws facilitating the free trade agreement with the United States, and;
5. Enter, in good faith, into a meaningful dialogue with Indigenous leaders to resolve this conflict.

Respectfully,

Common Frontiers [response can be sent to comfront@web.ca, or fax 905-352-3471]

Council of Canadians

Mining Watch Canada

Canadian Union of Postal Workers

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

United Church of Canada

Chiefs in Ontario

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Development and Peace

Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada

Public Service Alliance of Canada

Canadian Auto Workers

United Steel Workers

Polaris Institute

Confederation of Canadian Unions

Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale

Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

Ligue des droits et libertés,

Fédération des femmes du Québec.

CC.

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