

# Appeal: Répression in Peru Intensifies

Tuesday 11 March 2008, by [BLANCO Hugo](#) (Date first published: 4 March 2008).

**Hugo Blanco, one of Peru's most outstanding indigenous and campesino leaders, issued the following international appeal to supporters of democratic and human rights.**

**Blanco is the director of the monthly newspaper Lucha Indígena, published by an editorial team based in Cusco and Lima. Thus far, unlike his many experiences over the decades, he has personally escaped any direct repression.**

**Given the urgency of the appeal, I have prepared this rapid translation and made it available as widely as I can. Please help to give it even wider circulation now.**

**Felipe Stuart C., Managua**

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Not long ago repression in Peru was more a matter of laws than actions.

Now, however, APRA's legislation (APRA is President Alan García's party), with basic support from the ultra rightist Unidad Nacional party, and from the party of Fujimori who is now being tried for massive crimes, and with no consequent parliamentary opposition, is being used to launch a full assault against the people.

The law ordered the army to undertake policing functions. It characterizes protest actions as delinquencies. And it authorized the police to kill with impunity.

The legislation was passed to frighten people who, naturally, were going to protest government conduct in the service of the huge multinationals, a role that runs totally against the interests of the Peruvian population and the environment.

However, the reaction of the people was to overcome fear and hurl themselves into struggle. The campesino strike was the strongest of the most recent mobilizations at the national level.

Campesinos are being crushed by increases in living costs aggravated by the miserable prices they receive for their products, by lack of credit, higher fertilizer prices, etc.

The government talks a lot about its "Sierra exportadora" project. But what it has brought in practice (with the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States which subsidizes its agriculture) is an agrarian policy of "Peru - importer of agrarian produce."

The campesino strike was answered with repressive legislation that was put to use. The police fired at the heads of the demonstrators. Victims' bodies revealed two or three bullet holes in the nape which indicates that the shots came from behind. That is counter to the version of the police who acknowledge that the dead had bullet wounds. But Interior Minister Luis Alva - who is politically responsible for the killings - says, with no proof at all, that the demonstrators died from shot gun fire, and that in other cases demonstrators seized arms from the police to kill each other. We know that despite their lies they won't be censured. The majority of the parliamentary chamber members, no matter what party they're from, are agreed that everything must be one to defend the big multinational firms against grassroots protests.

There have been many attacks on the people. The main thing for them is the political, juridical, and police defense of the multinational mining companies against the Peruvian population and nature.

As well, the government has a Project to take away the lands of campesino communities. It is called "the law of the jungle" that is privatizing the Amazon region without respecting in any way the populations living there, and as a consequence are faced with the depredation of the zone. The government wants to privatize water, the ports, put down the teachers, and renege on signed promises to increase public service wages. It is beginning to privatize our archeological patrimony.

Faced with complaints against the rising cost of living, the government, through Mulder, the General Secretary General of APRA, claims that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is to blame for hunger in Peru.

### **Criminalizing protests**

The nation's chief prosecutor has reported that he has charged and called for the detention of 207 people because of the agricultural strike. And that 33 of them have thus far been sentenced in Huaura.

Charges have been filed against many other social fighters. They include the coordinator of the Cusco Regional Assembly and the leader of the Cusco Civil Construction Union, charged for their involvement in blockades and mobilizations of the people of Cusco in defense of their cultural patrimony. Ex-presidential candidate Ollanta Humala has been accused of responsibility for these mobilizations, but he has had nothing to do with them.

There are many other people charged in relation to different struggles at the national level.

### **The most recent scare**

We are now confronted with the surprise that in Tumbes, on the border with

Ecuador, seven presumed terrorists have been arrested for "preparing terrorist actions against the summit meetings to take place soon in Peru [In May European and American Heads of State will hold a European, Latin American, and Caribbean Summit; and in November there will be a meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum] and for having relations with the Colombian FARC and the MRTA in Peru."

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### **Who are these terrible "terrorists"?**

They are people who were returning to Peru after attending a public meeting in Quito that ended in a march in the streets of the Ecuadoran capital - the Second Congress of the Bolivarian Continental Coordinadoa (Coordinating Network) which took place from February 24 to 28.

Representatives came from various countries of the continent, including Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. There were also European delegations from Germany, Italy, and the Basque Country.

It is clear that this results from an order from Bush that is being loyally followed. One of the decisions of the meeting was to call for recognition of the FARC as a belligerent force to facilitate talks towards pacification in Colombia. But that does not necessarily mean identification or contact with the FARC.

To our knowledge no other participant in that meeting has been arrested in any other country, and accused of being "dangerous terrorists."

We call on national and international public opinion to be on the alert about this intensified repression in Peru, and to demonstrate opposition to it in every way possible, and for solidarity with the just demands of our people, victims of the regime's submission to multinational enterprises.

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\* Translated by Felipe Stuart Cournoyer.