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Embassy of Peru

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PRESS RELEASE ABOUT THE RECENT EVENTS IN BAGUA, AMAZONAS, PERU

On 5 and 6 June 2009 clashes occurred between police and groups of native inhabitants in the zone of Bagua, Amazonas. The unfortunate result was thirty-three people dead - 24 police officers and 9 civilians - according to official figures. One hundred fifty-five persons were injured, of which only 12 remain hospitalized.

No state institution, the National Police, the Prosecutor or the Ombudsman, nor any other institutions, such as the Red Cross, has information that there are any more civilian casualties than those that have been registered officially. The Peruvian Government deeply regrets the deaths of policemen and civilians, and expects that the situation will soon return to normal. It is deeply shocked that several policemen were tortured and brutally murdered.

The various autonomous institutions responsible for justice and law enforcement, the public prosecutor, the defense lawyers, and the Ombudsman, are making efforts to clarify these unfortunate events, within the framework of democratic governance and the rule of law. The

Government will continue to exercise the assigned powers by the Constitution, in order to guarantee the fundamental rights of all citizens without distinction of any kind and to provide legal assistance and supervision by competent authorities. In carrying out the corresponding judicial procedures, the government reassures those persons involved that they will continue to enjoy all the guarantees inherent to due process.

The international community is contributing to this effort. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is present on the ground and has unrestricted authorization to conduct its humanitarian mission. The Government encourages such activities.

The Government's objective is to avoid the destruction of the Amazon forest. Informal miners who pollute the rivers with mercury, illegal coca growers and those who practice illegal logging and timber smuggling have destroyed more than 10 million hectares (24.7 million acres) in recent years.

To defend and protect this ecological heritage of mankind, to reforest areas that were destroyed and to reestablish order, the Government approved legislation that reserves the ownership of 12 million hectares (29.6 million acres) to 320,000 native Amazonian inhabitants and 15 million hectares (37 million acres) as natural sanctuaries. But extremist political movements have convinced some of the indigenous population that they would be robbed of their land. This led to the

blockading of roads and the interruption of production plants. As required by law, the police proceeded to clear the roads and were attacked with firearms, with the result of 24 casualties. The elevated number of civilian deaths reported by sensationalists is thus inexact.

It should be noted that, for the purpose of seeking a solution to this situation, the country's political forces have agreed to suspend the implementation of legislative decrees 1090 and 1064, and to establish the National Coordination Group for the Development of Peoples from the Amazon - formed by members of the Executive Branch, Chairmen of the Regional Governments of the Amazon and indigenous peoples' representatives - who will be responsible for formulating a comprehensive plan for sustainable development for the Amazon region and indigenous peoples in the areas of education, health, land ownership, titling and registration of land rights and any other necessary measures.

The Peruvian Government reiterates its firm commitment to democracy, the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law and its continued willingness to maintain an open-ended dialogue with all sectors involved in this sensitive issue, so as to avoid the destruction of the Amazon, and in order to fulfill their commitment to its own ethnic groups.

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