

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS URGE THE PERUVIAN STATE TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST

Washington, D.C., July 18, 2023 — In anticipation of the protests to be convened in Lima beginning July 19, the undersigned international human rights organizations urge the Peruvian state to fulfill its obligations to respect, facilitate, and protect Peruvian citizens' peaceful exercise of the right to protest.

Amidst the institutional and human rights crisis that Peru has endured since December 2022, new mobilizations are expected this week in Lima and in other regions of the country to protest the government of President Dina Boluarte, the Congress of Peru and, at a more general level, the lack of an adequate solution to the serious crisis facing the country.

We note with concern that the initial reaction of some authorities to the call for new demonstrations has been to try to limit the right to protest by demanding permits or registering individuals entering Lima, threatening the use of force against protesters, and attempting to criminalize those wishing to exercise this right. In this context, the expansion of the state of emergency and the consequent restriction of rights, the significant, ostentatious deployment of security forces on the streets of Lima on July 15, as well as the establishment of police checkpoints to control the entry of people from the provinces into Lima, are particularly worrisome. The official discourse accompanying these measures seems designed to dissuade and even intimidate individuals who intend to participate in the protests.

As human rights organizations monitoring the situation in Peru, we urge the authorities to take measures before, during, and after the demonstrations to guarantee the exercise of the right to protest, and to refrain from the disproportionate, indiscriminate, and illegal use of force against civilians. As documented by various international organizations, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (both of whom visited the country), state security forces committed serious human rights violations against Peruvians who took to the streets to protest when the political crisis escalated in December 2022 and in the early months of 2023. The Ombudsman's Office documented the deaths of 49 protesters and bystanders, the vast majority of whom were shot with firearms that the evidence indicates were fired by police or military forces. According to the IACHR, these deaths constitute grave human rights violations and, in some cases, may amount to extrajudicial executions and qualify as massacres, thus representing serious breaches of the Peruvian state's international obligations.

Therefore, it is imperative that the Peruvian state respect, protect, facilitate and guarantee the right to peaceful protest and the rights associated with it, such as the rights to freedom of expression and association, and refrain from preventing citizens from traveling to participate in the protests planned between July 19 and 28. We urge the Peruvian state to comply with the legality, necessity, proportionality, and temporality requirements established by international law regarding the use of force and states of emergency in order to prevent these measures from being used illegally, abusively, and/or disproportionately.

Peruvian state institutions must ensure the full and free exercise of the right to protest, which is essential to democracy and serves as a historic instrument for demanding rights. Protests are a mechanism that allows citizens to participate in matters of public interest. Finally, we call on the international community to closely monitor the development of protests in Peru.