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Peru: Violence Continues, State Of Emergency Extended To Lima, Callao, & Five Provinces

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On Oct. 24, the official newspaper El Peruano reported that the government had decreed a 30-day state of emergency for Lima and the port of Callao, restricting civil rights and giving the military broad powers. State of emergency restrictions were also extended to the provinces of Yauyos, Cajatambo, Oyon, Barranca and Huaura, all in Lima department between Oct. 23 and Oct. 24. A department is the largest political subdivision in Peru and is divided into provinces. State of emergency decrees now affect residents of eight departments and several provinces, representing more than one-third of national territory. More than half the country’s 21 million people, including 7 million in Lima and Callao, are affected. Municipal elections are scheduled for Nov. 12, which Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas are reportedly attempting to sabotage. The New York Times cited unidentified government officials who estimate that more than 400 candidates have resigned in fear, and they expect more resignations before election day. The government has used state of emergency decrees to combat guerrilla activity since 1982. Among the restrictions implied in the decree are suspension of habeas corpus and freedom of movement rights, and guarantees against search and seizure. The decrees remain in effect for 30 to 60 days and are routinely extended. International human rights organizations, including Amnesty International in its annual report released this week, have accused Peru's armed forces of widespread abuse of human rights in the name of maintaining order. According to the Peruvian Senate's Committee on Violence and Pacification, 2,335 Peruvians have died thus far this year in political violence, compared to 1,986 for all of 1988. The figures for both years include civilians, rebels, soldiers and police. The Committee reported that 155 people died last month in political violence, compared with 272 so far this month. [Police said rebels set fire to 10 public and private buses on the evening of Oct. 23 in different areas in Lima and Callao, after forcing passengers to get off. No one was injured, police said.] (Basic data from Xinhua, 10/23/89; AP, 10/24/89; New York Times, 10/26/89)

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