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Amnesty International: Peruvian Government Uses "terror To Fight Terror"

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

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On Nov. 29 in London, Amnesty International released a report on human rights in Peru, stating that government security forces are using "terror to fight terror," and have killed 3,000 people in the last seven years using the same brutal tactics as their opponents. "Torture, mutilation, 'disappearance,' murder and rape have become a hallmark of the armed forces' 'campaign against terrorism'." The report said the armed forces have singled out young people as suspected supporters of the rebel Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) organization and hundreds have been killed, tortured or have simply disappeared. "The killing, torture and 'disappearance' of hundreds of children and young people has been one cost of a strategy of 'terror to fight terror' adopted by the armed forces in Peru," it said. The government must observe the law and not resort to terror tactics of enemies, said Amnesty International. Launching a campaign against human rights violations by the armed forces, it called on the government to investigate all alleged abuses and bring those responsible to justice. Amnesty International stressed the extensive and continuing massacres, mutilations and torture by opposition groups such as Sendero Luminoso. As a result, said the report, peasants in areas where the government has declared a state of emergency have been "caught between two fires," victims of massive abuse by both government forces and armed opposition. Abuses by security forces are taking place throughout Peru, said Amnesty International: "A climate of terror...is spreading across much of the country...Many people have relatives who have been killed in cold blood by both anti-government guerrillas and government forces." More than 3,000 detainees have disappeared in the past seven years and at least 3,000 more are estimated to have been killed by security forces, individually or in mass executions, the report said. Targets for human rights abuses by government forces are being drawn from increasingly broad sectors of society. Local government officials, community leaders, trade union members, journalists, lawyers, academics and people considered critics or opponents of the government have been threatened, killed or had their homes and offices bombed, Amnesty International said. Many killings were carried out after the victims had been detained and tortured, said the report. The report focuses on violations in the emergency zones, where more than half of Peru's 21 million people live under political-military command. In these zones, many killings appear to have been carried out to punish communities for rebel activities in their areas, it said. (Basic data from AP, 11/29/89)

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