

In Solidarity With Peruvian Coca Growers

Mr. Martín Vizcarra

Constitutional President of Peru

Mr. Ismael Rubén Vargas

Executive Director/ DEVIDA

Dear Sirs:

We represent regional and international organizations that promote drug policy reform from human rights and development-oriented perspectives. We write to express our concern about recent events in your nation.

We have received reports about the April 12, 2019 incident in El Carmen, San Gaban District in Puno, Peru in which two farmers were killed, seven more were injured, and a yet to be determined number of farmers was arrested. The incidents occurred during a confrontation between coca farmers and DIRANDRO, the antidrug police accompanying the CORAH Project during the initiation of the 2019 eradication efforts.

According to local organizations, the conflict arose when the forces began to set up a camp to carry out forced crop eradication in this Peruvian region. We understand that the farmers continue to blockade the Interoceanic Highway and local roads.

In view of the information provided, we respectfully request the following:

1. We echo the coca grower organizations and Peruvian human rights organizations' request for transparent investigation of the incident, and prompt sanctions for those responsible. Witnesses affirm that law enforcement authorities fired "indiscriminately" against coca growers.
2. We support the Asociación de Agricultores y Productores de la Hoja de Coca de Alto Huallaga Valle, Monzon y Padre Abad, and their counterparts in the VRAEM's request for a new coca grower registry in the region, the implementation of a community coca control system, greater investment in the agricultural sector, and the decriminalization of the coca leaf.
3. For three decades, forced eradication has failed to reduce coca crops, and has had extreme human, economic, and environmental costs. In Peru, like Bolivia and Colombia, the use of force in coca crop eradication has eroded respect for human rights, hindered institutional legitimacy with coca growing communities, increased the population's distrust of law enforcement authorities and forcibly displaced families, among other negative impacts.

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4. We regret that external pressures in the region complicate opportunities for dialogue and the pursuit of innovative agreements between communities and their governments. Diplomatic relations should be based on respect for self-determination, the principle of shared responsibility and should always avoid the narcotization of bilateral agendas.

Our organizations condemn the use of force especially when used disproportionately, and we believe that face-to-face dialogue is the most viable strategy. We have recently learned your government is contemplating reviewing and reevaluating of the alternative development model applied in Peru, and considering new options, which would allow for gradual and progressive crop reduction and development.

Therefore, we urge you and the coca grower organizations to engage in open dialogue on these issues and avoid future conflicts that could have devastating consequences for the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

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¹ The International Drug Policy Consortium is a global network of over 170 NGOs that promotes objective and open debate on drug policy at national, regional and international level. Ann Fordham and Marie Nougier have signed this letter on behalf of IDPC.

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