
[Peru: National strike demands respect for indigenous collective rights](#)

This past 8-10 July, the Peasant Confederation of Peru and the National Agrarian Confederation, with the wide backing of a large number of indigenous and peasant organizations, carried out a country-wide protest which coincided on July 9 with a national general strike called by the General Confederation of Workers of Peru (CGTP).

The protest drew together numerous communities, federations and organizations, including Amazonian indigenous groups, and was used to voice a range of messages. Chief among these was the demand for respect for the collective rights of indigenous peoples affected by the policies that the government is attempting to impose in the Amazon region, aimed at promoting industries with destructive impacts on the environment and inhabitants of the region, such as mining, oil drilling and tree plantations.

Some of the demands voiced by indigenous peoples in Peru relate to a series of draft laws and other legislative initiatives that violate indigenous collective rights, including the following:

* Legislative decrees 1015 and 994, aimed at coercively imposing a process by which collectively owned indigenous community lands throughout Peru would be divided into parcels and transferred to private individual ownership. This would leave the land unprotected, and open the way for the invasion of powerful economic groups, mainly representing extractive industries. The proposed regulations would also violate numerous articles of the Constitution, which guarantee the right to communal property and the right of communities to autonomously choose their own forms of organization.

* Draft law 840, known as the "Forest Law" (see WRM Bulletin N° 129), which is aimed at the privatization of thousands of hectares of land in the Amazon forest, purportedly to facilitate their "reforestation". The justification used is that the land in question is unforested, idle wasteland, with no acquired rights over it. However, indigenous organizations have countered that there are in fact no unused wasteland areas in the Amazon forest.

* Draft law 2133, which would authorize the sale of beaches, sandbars and marshes along riverbanks in the Amazon region.

The Front for the Defence and Development of the Upper Amazon (FREDESAA) maintains that these laws would leave the Amazon region's inhabitants landless, converting the legitimate owners of the land into workers and eventually slaves.

The July 9 general strike, which left much of the country paralyzed, particularly in the southern Andes, central and Amazon regions, was also aimed at protesting the government's neoliberal policies, the United States-Peru free trade agreement, and the privatization of ports and basic services like water.

In numerous cities people took to the streets to demonstrate and set up roadblocks on highways. The

government mobilized 100,000 police officers throughout the country and called out the armed forces to take control of strategic facilities such as electric power stations, drinking water reservoirs and airports. Around 200 protestors were arrested during the strike.

Article based on information from the following sources: “Unidad de los Pueblos ante Paro en la Amazonía del Perú”, Red Ucayali, 09/07/2008, <http://peru.indymedia.org/news/2008/07/40434.php>; “El paro pegó fuerte en Perú”, Carlos Noriega, Página 12, 10/07/2008, reprinted by bilaterals.org, http://www.bilaterals.org/article.php3?id_article=12653; “En defensa de las tierras de la Amazonía”, FREDESAA, 06/06/2008, <http://frentes-regionales.blogspot.com/2008/06/fredesaa-frente-de-defensa-y-desarrollo.html>